

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Framed-up Cuban patriots  
jailed in U.S. demand new trial**

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 66/NO. 47 DECEMBER 16, 2002

## U.S. sets up Iraq war command in Qatar

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Reinforcing their domination of Iraqi air space as Washington assembles military forces for an invasion of Iraq, U.S. and British jets bombed an oil-processing plant in the south of the country December 1. Residents in the area called Reuters wire service to report that at least four people had been killed and 27 wounded.

Officials with Iraq's Southern Oil Co. said the planes fired two rockets, hitting offices and people passing by on a nearby road. The attack extended the reach of the bombing raids, which have been targeting the country's air defense facilities.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Central Command (Centcom) is moving some 600 battle planning staff to the Gulf state of Qatar. The opening days of the Internal Look exercise the officers will lead coincide with the December 8 deadline set by the U.S. and British-crafted United Nations Security Council resolution directing Iraq to submit a list of its "weapons of mass destruction," as defined by the imperialist-dominated council.

Gen. Thomas Franks, commander-in-chief of the Florida-based Centcom, will head the Qatar-based exercise, along with Army, Marine, Air Force, Navy, and Special Operations commanders in the area.

"We are going to train the way we might fight," said Vice Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of the Fifth Fleet and the top Navy commander in the region.

When the exercise concludes in mid-December, the Pentagon will have in place its

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## N.Y. transit union: bosses' safety breaches kill workers

Mayor threatens to use antilabor law if union strikes for contract

BY STU SINGER

NEW YORK—Within the space of 35 hours, two transit workers were killed here while working near live track. Joy Antony was hit by a southbound No. 3 train November 21 in the subway station at Broadway and 96th Street while testing a signal light. Kurien Baby was hit by a northbound E train at the Canal Street Station November 23 while setting out a warning light to protect his work crew, which was replacing lights in the station.

Both men were members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, which represents the 34,000 subway and bus workers in this city.

Local 100 president Roger Toussaint told the media, "There isn't even proper flagging while they are working on live track with train movements on them. There's no one dedicated to watching for the trains. Not sufficient warning systems to warn oncoming trains."

After the second fatality the union ordered members to stop all track work unless there was full flagging protection. The union also instructed all train crews "to assume that there may be work underway that is not properly flagged and to take all necessary and appropriate precautions."

After this union action, the transit authority ordered a 24-hour freeze on non-emergency track work. And after negotiations with the union, the transit authority bosses agreed—temporarily—to assign a flagger to every work crew. But the bosses refused the union demand to make this elementary

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## France: gov't workers rally for jobs, pensions



Tens of thousands of rail, transit, and other government workers march in Paris November 26, during a one-day strike to defend jobs and retirement incomes in face of government plans to sell off state industries and cut pensions.

## Firefighters union in UK calls rally to defend jobs, services

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—Firefighters are mobilizing for a December 7 march and rally here to build solidarity with their fight to defend jobs, services, and living standards. Leaders of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) called the action a week after Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced that up to 11,000 firefighters may lose their jobs as part of the Labour government's proposals to "modernize" the fire service.

The 55,000 firefighters have already staged two national strikes. One began November 13 and lasted two days. A second strike lasting more than a week started November 22 after the government vetoed a deal negotiated by the FBU with the firefighters' employers, the Local Government Association (LGA). The agreement would have combined a 16 percent wage raise over 12 months with negotiations over "working practices."

During the strikes the government has organized 18,700 troops to drive firetrucks that have included both aging "Green Goddesses" and more modern equipment.

FBU leaders called off an eight-day strike due to begin December 4 and entered "exploratory talks" with a conciliation service, as a prelude to further negotiations with the

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## Bosses at United Airlines demand more takebacks from unionists

BY BERNIE SENTER

SAN FRANCISCO—The owners of United Airlines are seeking to wring \$5.2 billion from the wages and salaries of 83,000 workers at the airline over the next five and a half years. United is the country's second-largest carrier.

The federal government, through its Air Transportation Stabilization Board, has in-

sisted on these union concessions as a condition for granting United \$1.8 billion in federal loan guarantees that the carrier says are needed to make debt payments and stave off bankruptcy proceedings.

In face of this pressure and after years of identifying their well-being with the fortunes of the company, most of the unions at the airline have accepted the demands. The

pilots agreed to \$2.2 billion in salary cuts. Some 24,000 flight attendants voted 87 percent in favor of pay cuts totaling \$412 million.

The 24,500 ramp and customer service workers, who are members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), approved \$800 million in cuts—although 37 percent gave the proposal the thumbs-down.

On November 27, mechanics at United, who are also members of the Machinists, voted to reject the bosses' demand for wage cuts and other givebacks totaling \$700 mil-

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## Cuba featured at Mexico book fair

BY LUIS MADRID

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—"Culture has been indispensable for Cuba to face the challenges" of the revolution, including the U.S. economic war against the island, said Ricardo Alarcón at the opening ceremony of the 16th Guadalajara International Book Fair on November 30.

Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power, noted that by making a revolution, the Cuban people have been able to expand access to culture and education, putting them in a stronger position to defend their social gains.

Joining Alarcón on the platform were Abel Prieto, Cuba's minister of culture, and renowned Cuban writer Cintio Vitier. Cuba is this year's country of honor at the annual book fair.

The Guadalajara International Book Fair is one of the largest and most prestigious cultural gatherings in Latin America. As in past years, it has drawn hundreds of thousands of visitors. This year some 1,300 pub-

## International youth meeting opens in Mexico

SEE PAGE 4

lishing houses from more than 30 countries are participating in the nine-day event, bringing more than 80,000 titles. Major publishers and distributors are here, as are many librarians—including from the United States and Canada. The local and national media has given prominent coverage every day to the numerous book presentations, seminars, forums, panel discussions, musical performances, and other events held at the fair.

## Cuba: 'culture, education top priorities'

Alarcón pointed out that Washington maintains its four-decade-long embargo on the island "because of our willingness to chart and follow our own road." Despite the

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# U.S. sets up Iraq war command in Qatar

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forward operating headquarters ready for use in war. This military infrastructure will include a new command center at the Al Salyiyah base. Completed by U.S. forces in August 2000, Al Salyiyah includes 36 acres of warehouses that store military vehicles and other equipment for an Army brigade.

In addition to expanding the role of Al Salyiyah and refurbishing the Al Udeid air base, the Pentagon is also storing ammunition at a "secret facility in the desert" of Qatar, reported the *New York Times*.

The willingness of the Qatari government to openly cooperate with these extensive military operations is one reason the country is playing an increasingly prominent part in the buildup to war. "The country is stable, and they have welcomed us—those are two key characteristics," said Centcom's Maj. John Robinson.

The military spokesman also made it clear that the hundreds of officers are there not just for the Internal Look exercises, but on open-ended assignment. "It's not clear what will happen," he said. "Our fate is tied to what takes place with the weapons inspectors in Iraq."

The UN "inspections" have moved rapidly into full gear, targeting industrial and scientific plants throughout the country on the grounds of alleged "dual use" of their facilities. Among the places the "inspectors" have visited during the first few days are an animal foot-and-mouth disease vaccine plant, a graphite products factory, a science research center, and an engine-testing facility.

The London-based *Financial Times* noted December 3 that U.S. president George Bush has used "increasingly bellicose language" against Baghdad as he seeks to undercut the impact on public opinion of the Iraqi authorities' cooperative stance toward the UN teams.

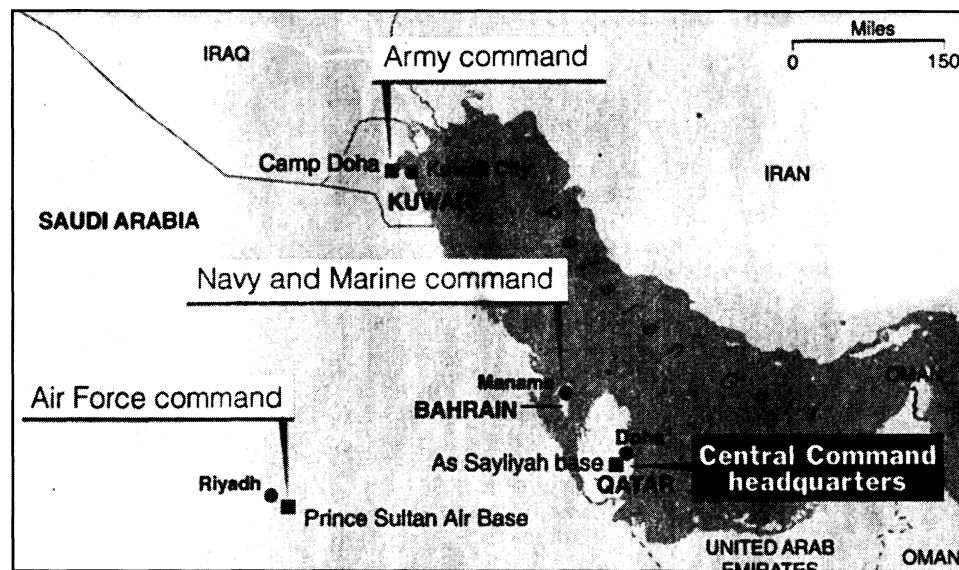
"A regime that fires upon American and British pilots is not taking the path of compliance," Bush said, repeating the standard pretext for the bombing raids. "A regime that sends letters filled with protests and falsehoods is not taking the path of compliance," he added—a reference to Iraq's diplomatic denials of possession of "weapons of mass destruction."

Vice President Richard Cheney left no doubt of Washington's intentions. "The demands of the world will be met, or action will be unavoidable," he told a National Guard audience in Colorado December 2.

In one sign of the widespread popular opposition in the region to the U.S.-led war moves, some 10,000 people marched in Istanbul December 1 to oppose the threatened invasion. "We will not be America's soldiers," they chanted. Turkish newspapers have reported that Washington has asked Ankara to provide between 17,000 and 40,000 troops to assist in the invasion.

"This is America's war and it is going to be waged even though thousands, tens of thousands will be killed," said Ersan Salman to an Associated Press reporter in Istanbul. The rally came a few days before a visit to Turkey by U.S. deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz and British foreign secretary Jack Straw.

The Pentagon is looking to expand Turkey's role beyond the provision of air bases. The *Wall Street Journal* reported De-



Map of U.S. military command centers in Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia

cember 3 that the country could "provide a launching pad for some lighter U.S. ground units that could be flown into Iraq via helicopter or cargo jets.... Without Turkey's support, an invasion would have to move in solely through Kuwait."

With the backing of its British ally, Washington is pressuring Berlin, Paris, and other European powers to drop their opposition to Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union. "History suggests that a European

Union that welcomes Turkey will be even stronger...and more richly diverse," said Wolfowitz on December 2, adding that the decision "is, of course, Europe's to make."

The December 3 *New York Times* reported that former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, "reflecting a sentiment not uncommon in Western Europe," said last month that Turkey was "not a European country" and that inviting it into the European Union would mean "the end of Europe."

## Cuba is featured at Mexico book fair

Continued from front page

embargo and the ongoing economic crisis that Cuba faces, Alarcón said, "culture and education have been made top priorities."

He explained that Cuba's own international book fair was extended this year—for the first time—from Havana to provinces across the country, including remote locations. This effort, he said, is part of a campaign to expand access to education at many different levels.

Cuba has a delegation of 600 present this year in Guadalajara, including many of its best-known writers, musicians, dancers, and other cultural figures.

Among those whose presence Alarcón recognized in the audience were Alicia Alonso, former prima ballerina and current director of Cuba's National Ballet, and singer-writer Silvio Rodríguez. Cuba's National Ballet, National Symphony Orchestra, and other cultural ensembles performed during the book fair.

One of the highlights of the opening day of the book fair was the presentation of the Juan Rufo literary award, which this year was given to Cintio Vitier. Named after one of Mexico's best-known writers, it is the most prestigious literary award in Latin America.

Cuba also has a large pavilion at the fair where publishers and artists are exhibiting their works. The pavilion was officially dedicated by well-known poet and essayist Roberto Fernández Retamar, president of Casa de las Américas, a Cuban cultural institution and publishing house. Also at the event were Minister of Culture Prieto and Iroel Sánchez, president of the Cuban Book Institute.

One of the works on exhibit that Prieto highlighted was an installation by Waldo Saavedra of 43 large canvases, hanging from the ceiling of the pavilion, depicting Cubans who through their work "each wrote a part of Cuba's history," he said. It depicted both revolutionary political leaders such as Ernesto Che Guevara, and writers and artists such as Nicolás Guillén, José Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier, and Alicia Alonso.

Prieto reported that 8,000 copies of José Martí's *La edad de oro* (The Golden Age), a children's classic, will be donated to children in Mexico at the close of the book fair.

### 'I want to read revolutionaries'

One of the publishers at the fair is Pathfinder, whose booth is staffed by a team of volunteers from several cities across the United States and Canada. It has been packed every day with visitors interested in the books on revolutionary politics that Pathfinder publishes.

"I'd like to broaden my horizons," said Isaac Galloga, who for the third year in a row stopped by the Pathfinder booth here.

As part of the wide array of titles on exhibit, this year Pathfinder has brought several new ones, published in both Spanish and English editions: *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, *The History of American Trotskyism* by James P. Cannon, *Their Trotsky and Ours* by Jack Barnes, and *From the Escambray to the Congo* by Cuban revolutionary Víctor Dreke. A new Spanish-language edition of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* by Jack Barnes is also prominently displayed. With nearly \$1,000 worth of books sold in the first two days, the pace of sales has been faster than in previous years.

"I want to read what the great revolutionaries—Malcolm X, Che, Fidel Castro—had to say," Galloga said when he purchased a copy of the latest title by Malcolm to add to his library.

The book fair overlapped with the 13th congress of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students (OCLAE), which drew nearly 1,200 youth from across Latin America to this city. On December 1, a few hundred of these youth visited the book fair. For a couple of hours, the crowd at the Pathfinder booth was so large that it was nearly impossible to get into the stand. A number of youth from Haiti, Mexico, Canada, and the United States walked away with big stacks of Pathfinder titles.

The top-selling titles have been *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* by Barnes, *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, and issue no. 1 of the Spanish-language Marxist magazine *Nueva Internacional*, featuring "The Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq."

Rollande Girard also contributed to this article.

## THE MILITANT

### Debt crisis squeezes working people

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# Ecuador election registers sharp social crisis

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Former army colonel Lucio Gutiérrez, who came to prominence when a popular revolt led by Indian organizations toppled a government hated for its economic austerity measures, won the presidency of Ecuador November 24.

Gutiérrez becomes the sixth president in six years in this South American nation of 13 million. Two previous regimes were brought down by mass revolts against imperialist-dictated economic policies. Abdalá Bucaram was removed by Congress in 1997 after protests against government policies culminated in an outpouring of 2 million people in the streets of Quito, the capital. Then Jamil Mahuad, whose government had established the U.S. dollar as the official currency, was driven from power in January 2000 by an uprising that replaced him with a short-lived provisional government backed by mass indigenous organizations.

Because of the depth of the social crisis in Ecuador, most traditional capitalist parties and politicians have become widely discredited. Both Gutiérrez, whose January 21 Patriotic Movement is named for the January 2000 rebellion, and his opponent Alvaro Noboa built a following by claiming they would address the devastating conditions workers and farmers confront in Ecuador.

Noboa, a banana tycoon who inherited one of the richest fortunes in Latin America, demagogically portrayed himself as a man of the people. One of his main campaign promises was to build 200,000 homes that could be purchased for \$48 each.

## Severe economic crisis

Workers and peasants in Ecuador face a severe economic crisis that has been aggravated by government policies that prioritize payments to imperialist creditors on the country's \$13 billion foreign debt, which accounts for half the annual budget. Unemployment is officially 14 percent, with the number of underemployed reaching much higher.

Land in this agricultural country is concentrated in the hands of a few rich landlords—less than 5 percent of the farmers control half the land. Conditions are worse in rural areas, especially where the Indian population is concentrated. Some 80 percent of peasant women have barely reached elementary school education or have had no education at all.

In addition to being exploited as rural producers, Indians in Ecuador, who make up some 40 percent of the population, are subjected to second-class status and racist discrimination fostered by the ruling rich. It was only in 1998 that the principal Indian language, Quechua, was officially recognized. Organizations such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) have mobilized indigenous communities to press for their rights.

A spiraling economic crisis sparked the January 2000 rebellion. The bottom of the



Quito, Ecuador, Jan. 21, 2000: Soldiers step aside as members of Indian organizations storm Congress. A revolt by working people, sparked by drastic austerity measures, brought down the regime, which was replaced by a short-lived provisional government backed by indigenous movement.

economy fell out as the largest banks in Ecuador went bankrupt, while rising unemployment and 60 percent inflation fueled large street protests. At the peak of the upsurge, some 5,000 Indian farmers and workers marched into the parliament building in Quito after the final straw: when Mahuad announced his decision to replace the country's currency, the sucre, with the U.S. dollar at a rate of 25,000 to 1, thereby slashing already meager wages overnight.

In Guayaquil, the country's largest city, a body made up of representatives of Indian groups, unions, and other mass organizations briefly took power.

In Quito, lower-level military officers backed a provisional government after the ouster of Mahuad. That triumvirate was made up of Antonio Vargas, president of CONAIE; a former supreme court president; and Colonel Gutiérrez. The provisional regime, however, then ceded power to the army, which immediately turned over the government to Mahuad's vice president, Gustavo Noboa.

Gutiérrez was jailed six months for his role in the revolt. After his release he formed the January 21 Patriotic Movement. Gutiérrez's presidential campaign was backed by the three main indigenous organizations—including the party Pachakutik, linked to CONAIE—and the Popular Democratic Movement, a radical coalition.

## Imperialist interests

U.S. and European capitalists are driving to gain more control over South America's vast natural resources, including the oil

wealth of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. They are also concerned about the explosive conditions that have led to mass outpourings in countries such as Ecuador.

Nearly half the oil imported by Washington now comes from the Americas, with the three Andean nations providing more than 2 million barrels per day, about 20 percent of U.S. imports. A consortium of multinational oil companies is nearing completion of a new \$1.3 billion heavy-crude oil pipeline in Ecuador, which was promoted by the Gustavo Noboa administration as a means to double oil production to 850,000 barrels.

## U.S. military intervention

Washington is stepping up its military intervention in the Andean region to protect its interests. Plan Colombia, a \$1.3 billion program to fund the Colombian armed forces, was passed by the U.S. Congress in 2000 under the guise of fighting drug trafficking. Last July, however, Washington shifted to what it describes as counter-insurgency operations, dropping the pretense that its military intervention in Colombia was aimed at uprooting drugs. U.S. troops will train some 4,000 Colombian soldiers as a rapid-reaction force stationed at key spots along Occidental Petroleum's 500-mile oil pipeline in the northeastern part of the country.

In Ecuador, the U.S. government was allowed to set up a military base in the town of Manta in November 1999, signing a 10-year lease with Mahuad's government. Gen. Charles Wilhelm, then head of the U.S. Southern Command, described the base as

his "number one priority" because it "enables us to achieve full coverage of Peru, Colombia, and...areas of Bolivia."

This will be accomplished "through a pair of Awacs surveillance planes...and tankers to refuel them in the air," reported the *New York Times*, adding that "the planes will be also be able to monitor air and marine activity well into the Caribbean." Washington is upgrading the facility, including spending millions for the construction of living quarters for 200 U.S. military and civilian contract personnel.

## Gutiérrez's election campaign

Gutiérrez, a mestizo who contrasted with the lily-white political establishment, campaigned in an olive green military uniform and built his campaign around the themes of stopping corruption and doing something about the economic crisis.

He told a television interviewer on the night of the election, "Ecuador can start to become a more just country, a more honest country, a country that with better living standards, and a country that is authentically democratic."

The program of his January 21 Patriotic Movement questioned the continued use of the U.S. dollar as the official currency, and whether Ecuador would pay the \$13 billion debt to imperialist financial institutions. Nina Pacari Vega, a leader of the Indian party Pachakutik, which is backed by CONAIE, announced that she would become a member of Gutiérrez's cabinet, to be named on December 15.

After making gains in the first round of elections, Gutiérrez shifted to more conciliatory language, saying his government would make payments on the foreign debt, negotiate with the IMF, and allow Washington to maintain the Manta military base. After the elections he said, "I want to give the greatest of assurances to the national productive sector, the national financial sector, and the international financial sector."

U.S. president George Bush telephoned Gutiérrez to congratulate him on his victory. Nonetheless, the imperialists remain wary of the high expectations among workers and farmers produced by the election results.

Luis Olmedo Iza, a leader of CONAIE, emphasized that the indigenous peoples have been demanding a moratorium on the foreign debt, and that "Lucio Gutiérrez will understand that we are not just asking. We do not just want an electoral victory, but a social victory to change the country."

# N.Y. transit workers enforce safety rules

## Continued from front page

safety precaution permanent. Flaggers are workers whose only job is to watch for on-coming trains and warn both the train crews and work crews. There were no flaggers assigned to either of the crews that Joy Antony or Kurien Baby were part of.

Since World War II, 132 track workers have been electrocuted or killed by trains in New York City, 21 of them in the last 20 years.

Mike Nichols, a Local 100 shop steward at the 145th Street station in Harlem, said, "Safety language has to be negotiated." Another worker walking by as we talked added, "The system was responsible for those deaths."

Nichols said the transit authority has already notified workers that all vacations after December 14 have been canceled and written medical excuses will be required for any absence. He explained this is preparation for using the antilabor Taylor Law and is intended as intimidation against a possible strike. The contract for the transit workers expires December 15.

The union has organized a series of large demonstrations and meetings leading up to the contract expiration. Some 12,000 workers rallied in midtown Manhattan October 30, and two shifts of union meetings have been called for Saturday, December 7 at the Javits Convention Center.

The transit workers contract is now the focus of the ruling class effort in New York to drive down wages and benefits, impose speedup and cut safety provisions, and cut back social services.

## Bloomberg warns transit workers

The point man for this drive in New York is the mayor, billionaire businessman Michael Bloomberg. The TWU has taken a stand in opposition to both the service cuts and fare hikes that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority is planning.

The day after Joy Antony's death and hours before Kurien Baby was killed, Bloomberg took the occasion to warn the transit workers against going on strike when their contract expires. The mayor stated, "If a strike vote is taken, we will go straight to court and ask a court for an order to keep that from happening. If anybody does strike, the penalties are very severe."

Bloomberg was referring to the New York State slave labor Taylor Law, which prohibits strikes by public employees and establishes penalties, including jailing and fines of each individual striker of two days pay for every day they are on strike.

The Taylor Law was passed by the state legislature in 1967 after transit workers carried out a 12-day strike in 1966, in spite of the jailing of eight of its union leaders. The union also went on strike in 1980 for 11 days, succeeding in rolling back some of the bosses' takeback demands. But the union was fined \$1.5 million and 22 day's pay was taken away from each striking worker.

The deaths of the two workers led to media coverage detailing how dangerous the working conditions are in the subways. For both transit workers and millions of other working people, the deaths of these two brothers has raised the stakes even higher in this fight.

## From Pathfinder

### The Leninist Strategy of Party Building

*The Debate on Guerrilla Warfare in Latin America*

by Joseph Hansen

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# United Airlines bosses intensify takeback demands on workers

Continued from front page

lion. The vote surprised the airline bosses, as well as the union officials. The employers immediately went to work on the Machinists, pressuring the officials to organize a revote on the same contract proposal on December 5.

The proposals the 13,000 mechanics rejected included a 7 percent wage cut, which would not be fully restored until 2008. Workers would forego four days of vacation pay each year and pay increases previously agreed to in the contract would be canceled.

The proposed cuts were the topic of intense discussion on the job in the week preceding the vote. Union officials strongly urged approval of the wage cuts. At San Francisco International Airport, improvised "Vote No" signs sprang up throughout the sprawling maintenance facility and on workers' tool boxes. Homemade flyers urging a rejection were widely distributed and some workers wore "No Concessions" T-shirts. One Machinist distributed a flyer showing how the concessions amounted to a loss of \$53,000 per worker.

Other workers voiced approval of the concessions as the only way to avoid the worse fate they perceived if the company filed for bankruptcy.

Raucous union meetings took place the day before the vote. Officials argued for the concessions as the only possible alternative. During the discussion, one IAM member stated, "We've heard a lot of stockbroker talk, a lot of lawyer talk, but no union talk."

## Company's bankruptcy blackmail

Big-business commentators immediately decried the mechanics' rejection vote as making bankruptcy "virtually inevitable."

Union officials warned that the mechanics' vote jeopardized the overall pay-cut agreement, which was contingent on every union at United approving "its share" of the giveback package. Earlier this fall, the United Airlines Union Coalition, composed of officials from each of the airline's five unions, agreed to work toward the \$5.2 billion concession goal. In a letter to ramp workers and customer-service agents at United, IAM District 141 president Randy Canale said, "I sincerely and truly hope that our co-workers in maintenance find a way to join the rest of United's employees in the

effort to save our airline, our contracts, and our families' future. There is no positive alternative to the equality of sacrifice that is required of us all." Referring to company chief Glenn Tilton, Canale said, "We have to give him the tools and support he needs to help protect our futures."

After the IAM scheduled the revote by the mechanics, the airline announced it would use a two-week grace period to defer a \$375 million debt payment owed to bondholders that came due December 2. The company is renegotiating agreements with a dozen banks that hold \$7 billion in leases on United's fleet of aircraft. If United declares bankruptcy, it will not be the first major carrier to file for bankruptcy court protection. TWA, USAir, Continental, Eastern Airlines, Pan Am, Braniff, ValuJet, National, and others have done the same over the past decade or so. Some resulted in assets being liquidated and absorbed by other airlines, while other carriers reorganized. Bondholders have been the first in line for payment in every case.

UAL, the parent company of United, says it is losing about \$7 million every day. It has reported \$4 billion in operating losses since mid-2000. Since then the company has slashed its workforce from 100,000 to 83,000, cutting the number of flights by 20 percent. Over the past year the airline's stock has lost 92 percent of its value, a factor fueling the mechanics' anger at the company's Employee Stock Ownership Plan. In 1994, workers and pilots at United received a 55 percent stake in UAL stock in exchange for granting the company several billion dollars in wage cuts. Active employees do not have access to their stock holdings.

When the stock was selling for nearly \$100 a share in the late 1990s, workers envisioned retiring on the tens of thousands their stock was worth. But over the past year, unable to sell their stake in this "employee-owned airline," workers have watched the price of the stock plunge. This spring mechanics as well as ramp and customer service workers organized by the IAM received their first pay raise in eight years. The previous contract had expired in July 2000 and a new contract was not approved until March of this year.

In late 2001, when the mechanics threatened to slow down operations in response to company foot-dragging on negotiations, a court issued an injunction barring any



Militant/Deborah Liatos

**Mechanics, ramp workers, and other Machinists at United Airlines picket at San Francisco airport, Feb. 21, 2001. United bosses are using threat of bankruptcy to demand deep wage cuts and other givebacks from airline workers.**

work slowdown. A White House-appointed federal panel made a contract recommendation that workers initially voted down by 68 percent in February. The contract they finally approved contained small wage increases and stipulated retroactive pay of \$478 million, stretched out over two years starting in December 2002. The proposed contract amendment, however, cancels this back pay. Taking advantage of discontent among mechanics at the IAM officialdom, as well as promoting a narrow craft mentality, the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) is waging a raiding operation against the IAM at United. On March 30 AMFA, which claims it never accepts concessions, submitted more than 8,000 cards of mechanics at United seeking to replace the IAM.

In a letter to mechanics at United titled "Why AMFA represents future for mechanics at United Airlines," AMFA organizing committee members Malik Miah and Rich Lesnik state, "Most mechanics view the IAM as simply another arm of management." They add, "In our view, a democratic craft union would be stronger, even with its small size, than a bureaucratic so-called industrial-type union." AMFA has successfully challenged the IAM at Northwest Airlines and Alaska Airlines by claiming that skilled mechanics need to organize separately from other airline workers in order to fight concessions.

Mechanics at United have kept a close eye on their counterparts at bankrupt US Airways, who agreed to significant concessions earlier this year. On November 17, US Airways announced it wanted another round

of pay and job cuts. The bosses are demanding draconian work rule changes. They claim they need \$200 million more in annual cuts—in addition to the \$1.3 billion originally projected—to meet the bankruptcy requirements.

Last summer, unionized workers at US Airways agreed to \$900 million in annual wage and benefit cuts over six and a half years. Faced with the bosses' threat of bankruptcy, workers reluctantly approved the givebacks, with the mechanics initially voting them down. Proposed amendments to the contract include hiring outside contractors to perform work done by unionized mechanics and doubling employee contributions for medical benefits.

There is also a provision that in case of a U.S.-led war against Iraq, the airline bosses would be authorized to cut wages 5 percent for up to 18 months. US Airways also announced it would lay off 2,500 workers in the next three months and immediately shut down its maintenance facility in Tampa, Florida, putting 500 mechanics out of work. The airline owes creditors \$10.7 billion.

In addition to the thousands of other airline workers who have lost their jobs in the last year, airline manufacturer Boeing has laid off 30,000 workers this year alone.

In September, 62 percent of the 25,000 IAM members at Boeing voted against a concession contract with big hikes in health coverage premiums and proposals to contract out work. But the pact was put into effect because the "no" vote was short the two-thirds majority required by the union's constitution.

## Congress bails out airlines

Last year, right after September 11, the major airlines made a beeline to Congress and asked for federal aid. Congress approved \$15 billion in airline bailout legislation and established the federal Air Transportation Stabilization Board (ATSB) to review loan proposals. The loans are withheld until the airlines impose wage concessions and other cost reductions to the satisfaction of the ATSB. United's competitors have challenged its application for a government loan.

Continental Airlines chief executive Gordon Bethune said on CNBC that taxpayers should not subsidize United Airlines. American Airlines and Northwest Airlines have submitted their own "analyses" of United's financial condition before the ATSB. In an expression of the depth of the economic crisis, Carol Hallett, outgoing head of the Air Transport Association, the airlines' top trade association, declared in a November 26 speech to airline executives that "failure to fix the root causes of the airline industry's meltdown may necessitate nationalization of the industry." She quickly added that "the cost of that step is intolerable."

A state takeover of the airlines, Hallett said, would mean that "we will have failed to sustain a system that constitutes 40 percent of the world's commercial aviation system. We will have failed to sustain a system that underpins 25 percent of the world's economy."

She noted that the industry's pretax losses for this year alone are \$9 billion, and that the nine largest passenger airlines now carry more than \$100 billion in on-balance sheet debt.

*Larry Lane, member of the Machinists union at the United Airlines maintenance base in San Francisco, contributed to this article.*

# Americas student conference opens in Mexico

BY CHRISTIAN CORNEJO  
AND RÓGER CALERO

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—More than 1,000 youth from countries across the Americas took part in the 13th congress of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students (OCLAE), held here from November 29 to December 2. They focused their discussions on the social catastrophe facing millions in Latin America and the Caribbean and how to address this crisis in the interests of the majority of working people. A range of points of view were expressed.

Conference organizers report that 1,187 delegates from 26 countries attended the event. They included representatives of student organizations, as well as many unaffiliated youth, from across the continent. The largest group, 281 people, was from Mexico. The second largest delegation came from Cuba, with 162 youth. Among them were students from 25 countries—including African nations—studying at the Latin American School of Medicine and the Latin American Sports School. More than 40 from the United States and several from Canada participated in the congress.

The youth gathering in Guadalajara took

place immediately after the Second International Meeting Against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, held in Havana, Cuba, November 25-28. A number of youth participating in the Havana conference flew to Mexico to take part in the OCLAE congress, where some of the same political themes were discussed.

The student conference opened with a panel discussion on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). First proposed in 1994, the FTAA is a U.S.-dominated trade bloc that, if the imperialist powers realize their plans, will eventually include 32 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean plus Washington and Ottawa.

Cuba's revolutionary leadership has waged an international campaign to oppose and educate around the FTAA, explaining that U.S. imperialism's goal is to plunder more freely Latin America's natural resources and labor and reinforce the existing trade relations between imperialist and semicolonial nations. Washington is seeking to use the trade bloc to strengthen its edge over its European imperialist rivals.

Panelists touched on various aspects of the FTAA and how it is intertwined with growing U.S. military intervention in South American countries, such as Colombia and Ecuador. They reported that Washington has also set up or is seeking to set up a number of military bases in the Southern Cone, from Eastern Paraguay to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina.

Delegates from Puerto Rico highlighted the fight against U.S. colonial rule in that

Latin American nation, including the movement to stop the U.S. Navy's use of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques for bombing practice.

In the course of the conference, students from Uruguay and El Salvador described struggles in their respective countries to oppose moves to put the public health-care system increasingly into private hands. In El Salvador, thousands of working people and youth are continuing to organize large protests against the privatization measures there.

Members of the Colombian delegation spoke about opposition to the repressive measures that the U.S.-backed regime of Alvaro Uribe is taking against workers and farmers under the guise of "fighting terrorism."

Delegates belonging to Cuba's University Student Federation (FEU) and Union of Young Communists (UJC) explained the political campaigns that revolutionary youth on the island are carrying out to deepen involvement of other Cuban youth in the revolution.

Another topic of discussion was the recent electoral victories of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brazil and former colonel Lucio Gutiérrez in Ecuador, as well as efforts to oppose a pro-imperialist coup in Venezuela against the government of President Hugo Chávez.

The OCLAE congress overlapped with the Guadalajara International Book Fair, where Cuba was this year's country of honor (see front-page article). An afternoon was set aside for delegates to visit the book fair, and hundreds took advantage of that opportunity.

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# UN plan for Cyprus maintains foreign troops

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN  
AND NATASHA TERLEXIS

ATHENS, Greece—While declaring its support for the reunification of Cyprus, a new United Nations plan backs the continued intervention in the country's affairs of the imperialist powers of Britain and Greece and the government of Turkey, all of which have troops stationed there. The 150-page document, which was drafted by representatives of London and Washington, was presented to all three governments and to leaders of the Cypriot government and Turkish-occupied section of the country on November 11.

The proposal legitimizes the continued presence on Cyprus of roughly equal numbers of Greek and Turkish troops. The two British bases on the island would also remain. The document is consistent with the 1959 Zurich Agreement drafted by London on the eve of independence. This incorporated the latter's "right" to a military presence and authorized Athens and Ankara to militarily intervene. The UN plan legitimizes the division of the country between Greek and Turkish-occupied sections that followed intervention by both powers in 1974.

Along these lines, the plan proposes the creation of two autonomous regions, one Greek-Cypriot, the other Turkish-Cypriot, under a federated structure with a single citizenship. It calls for a parliament that includes a chamber of Deputies elected with proportional representation and a senate that would include equal numbers of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots, while the territory's presidency would rotate between members of the two communities.

This elaborate institutionalization of internal division and foreign domination extends to the proposed structure of the country's highest court, which would consist of three Greek-Cypriot, three Turkish-Cypriot, and three "internationally appointed" judges.

Under the plan, area in the north dominated by the Turkish government would be reduced in size from its present 37 percent of the island to less than 29 percent. Two towns would be transferred to Greek-Cypriot sovereignty. Over the following 30 years 80,000 Greek-Cypriot refugees of the 200,000 who were forced out of the north in 1974 would return there. No mention is made of the tens of thousands of Turkish-Cypriot refugees created at that time. In this way the situation of the refugees would remain an open wound and an impediment to national unity.

## Captive destiny

The document's call for "reunification" and independence of Cyprus, and similar lofty phrases, mask the reality that the island's destiny remains captive to the interests of, and conflict among, the imperialist powers and the Turkish government. In reality the document addresses the disputes around the island's status and role that have shadowed proposals to expand the imperialist-dominated European Union (EU). It also registers the strategic geographical position of the island state at a time when Washington is leading an imperialist

drive to war in the Middle East.

Following a U.S.- and British-sponsored war resolution in the UN Security Council establishing a series of provocative "weapons inspections" of Iraq, the chief inspector, Hans Blix, has set up Cyprus as a forward post for the UN teams.

Along with Malta and eight Eastern European workers states, the Cypriot government has applied for membership of the EU. The decision on the applications will be finalized at the December 12 EU summit in Copenhagen, Denmark.

This application is a point of conflict between the Greek and Turkish governments. Athens, already an EU member, has declared that it will veto any expansion that does not include Cyprus. Ankara, on the other hand, has in the past warned that it will annex the Turkish-occupied northern part of the island if the southern part is admitted into the EU.

The Turkish application for membership has been stalled for a number of years, in spite of pressure on the key EU powers of Berlin and Paris from Washington, which regards Ankara as an important ally in its preparations for war on Iraq.

## Greek government welcomes plan

The Greek government responded positively to the proposals. "A commonly acceptable solution which will come to complement Cyprus's EU accession will be an achievement of the first rank for our peoples," declared Prime Minister Constantinos Simitis at a November 11 press conference.

The former foreign minister of Greece and leader of Simitis's Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Theodoros Pangalos, initially rejected the plan, saying that it gives "veto power to the Turks" in Cypriot affairs.

Forces on the right of bourgeois politics in Greece and Cyprus have also voiced nationalist opposition. The Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus stated that it legitimizes the 1974 Turkish invasion. Speaking at a protest against the plan in Nicosia, one politician—the former mayor of Kyrenia—fumed that the plan would encourage Ankara to make claims on the Aegean Sea and on Thrace, a northern Greek province that is home to an oppressed Turkish minority.

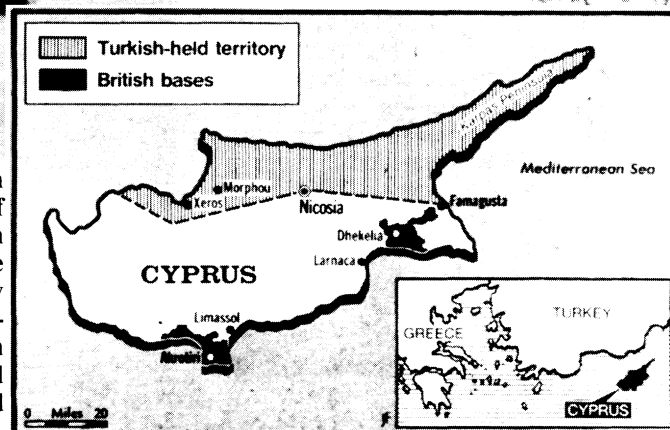
The Greek capitalists use the island as a platform for their shipping concerns and as a launch pad for investments in the Middle East. "We are interested in the region, we have clients in Lebanon and we would want to serve them through the base we have in Cyprus," said Athanasios Karahalios, the managing director of Hellenic Petroleum, Greece's largest refining company.

These capitalists are also licking their lips at the prospect of a Cyprus that is forced to open up its economy as part of qualifying for EU membership. "Cyprus's energy market is now a relatively closed one, with one state-controlled refinery.... There is also one electricity provider, the Electricity Authority of Cyprus. Those restrictions are likely to be eased when Cyprus joins the European Union," reported the Athens-based daily *Kathimerini*.

"We have to find a solution to the Cyprus issue. Otherwise, our power in Cyprus



Above, British troops in Nicosia, capital of Cyprus, in 1955. UN plan for "reunification" of the Mediterranean country in fact maintains territorial division, along with British military bases and garrisons of Greek and Turkish troops.



weakens," said Turkish prime minister-designate Abdullah Gul in a more muted response to the plan. Gul is a member of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which holds 65 percent of parliamentary seats following the November 3 elections in Turkey. "The document includes favorable aspects but also problematic aspects," he added in an interview with CNN.

Yasir Yakis, chief foreign policy aide for AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, made Turkish support for Cyprus's EU application contingent on success for Turkey's bid, saying that "we believe completion of these negotiations should be simultaneous with Turkey's accession negotiations."

## Prey of different empires

For hundreds of years Cyprus has been dominated by different imperial powers. A territory of the Ottoman Empire, it was secured by London as a colony in 1878, and became an important part of its military presence in the region. The British imperialists fostered divisions among ethnic Turks, Greeks, and other nationalities who inhabited the island. Greek landowners and merchants enjoyed a privileged status under this colonial setup. In 1960 the island won its formal independence.

For much of the 20th century the Greek imperialists also coveted the island, seeking to annex it under the slogan of "unity of the Greek nation." Following a massacre of Turkish Cypriots in 1964 UN imperialist troops

arrived. They have been there ever since.

The Turkish-Cypriot minority constitutes an oppressed nationality within this semicolonial country. Their unemployment rate is double that of Greek-Cypriots, and their average income is one-seventh. Turkish-Cypriot workers provide a large chunk of cheap day-labor in the Greek-Cypriot areas, returning to their homes in the Turkish-occupied north at night.

In the 1960s the Cypriot government of Archbishop Makarios moved hesitantly in the direction of making Cyprus independent of both London and Athens. It refused to join the U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance and became a prominent member of the Nonaligned Movement in 1961.

Thirteen years later the Greek military government—installed by a U.S.-supported coup—used troops garrisoned on Cyprus in a coup that overturned the Makarios government. This in turn gave Ankara the pretext to launch its own intervention, citing concern for the safety of the Turkish-Cypriot inhabitants.

UN and British troops stood by as Cypriot armed forces resisted the July 20 Turkish invasion for two days until a cease-fire was declared. Opposition to the Cyprus coup and the Greek military's hand in it helped loosen the Greek army's hold on the governments of both Greece and Cyprus. Parliamentary rule was restored in both before the month was out. In spite of these events, Cyprus remained divided and occupied.

## Foreign troops out of Cyprus!

The following excerpts are from an editorial in the Sept. 9, 1996, *Militant*. Appearing under the above headline, the editorial responded to a rise in tensions in Cyprus between the Greek and Turkish occupying forces.

The recent killings of two Greek-Cypriots by Turkish occupation forces and their supporters have once again given the world a glimpse at a prospect that a few years ago would have been unthinkable: war within NATO's southern flank.

The rulers of Greece, faced with a deep economic crisis, are betting their economic survival on expanding their role throughout the region of the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. In their attempts at economic expansion, Athens comes up not only against its imperialist rivals, but also the capitalist rulers of Turkey. They have used this recent episode to whip up nationalist anti-Turkish sentiment and attempt to rally working people around their massive militarization and austerity program.

Twenty-two years ago the military dictatorship then running Greece staged a military coup in Cyprus with the aim of annexation.

The rulers of Turkey responded by occupying the island's northern third, allegedly to protect the Turkish-Cypriot minority, and installed a puppet military regime. Greek and Turkish rulers are both responsible for partition, as well as British imperialism, which maintains two bases there, and Washington.

Working-class forces on both sides of the buffer zone must begin to answer the Greek and Turkish rulers' chauvinist campaign, which leads only to war and permanent partition. Such a united answer can begin to give lie to the rulers' claim that "Greeks and Turks cannot live together."

All foreign troops deployed in Cyprus are an obstacle to reunification and independence. British, UN, and Greek imperialist troops, as well as Turkish occupation forces, must be removed from Cypriot soil.

The right to return of all refugees forcibly removed from their lands through the occupation and its aftermath—200,000 Greek- and 30,000 Turkish-Cypriots—must be guaranteed.

Unification can only be achieved on the basis of respect for the rights of the historically oppressed Turkish-Cypriot minority, including that of self-determination.

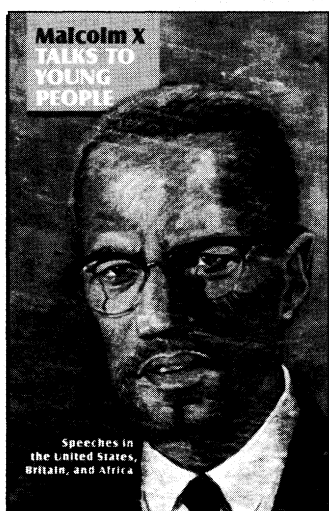
*New, expanded edition is now available*

## Malcolm X Talks to Young People

**"All over the world, it is young people who are actually involving themselves in the struggle to eliminate oppression and exploitation. They are the ones who most quickly identify with the struggle and the necessity to eliminate the conditions that exist."** —Malcolm X, January 1965

This new, expanded edition includes four talks given to young people in Ghana, the United Kingdom, and the United States in 1964 and 1965; an interview with the *Young Socialist* magazine; and an enlarged display of photographs. In the last months of his life, Malcolm X spoke out more and more directly about the capitalist roots of racism, exploitation, and imperialist oppression. The new English-language edition has been released together with the Spanish-language edition, *Malcolm X habla a la juventud*. \$15.00 for each book.

Both books can be ordered on-line at [www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com). Also available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8. Please include \$3 for shipping and handling of the first book and 50 cents for each additional book.



# New Zealand strikers highlight health-care crisis

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Public hospitals around New Zealand have faced a series of strikes this year, as a range of workers—from nurses to radiographers to kitchen employees—have taken action to fight for better working conditions.

Their protests have highlighted the snowballing crisis in public health services after decades of government underfunding. Many of the hospital workers' demands focus on the growing inability to provide the level of patient care that is necessary. They point to staff shortages throughout the country's health-care system, resulting in treatment delays, overwork, and safety risks. Nationwide, public hospitals are short 2,000 nurses, as well as junior doctors, laboratory workers, and others.

Last December, Minister of Health Annette King announced that "cost growth"—and therefore wage increases—for District Health Boards with big budget deficits must be capped at 2 percent. District Health Boards operate local groups of public hospitals.

The largest, in Auckland, has been told it must pull itself "out of the red" within three years. In July, its chief executive ordered nearly \$4 million cut from "direct treatment costs"—bandages, drugs, blood supplies, and food (NZ\$1=US\$ 50 cents). It is the health-care workers' widespread refusal to accept such restrictions that has triggered strike actions.

In Auckland, 36 heart and lung technicians who carry out both diagnostic and therapeutic procedures struck for three days beginning October 23 and again for three half-days from November 19, in addition to taking strict breaks and refusing overtime. The technicians, who are members of the Association of Professional and Executive Employees (APEX), want a 9.2 percent pay hike. Like many other health-care workers, they argue that the health board's offer of 2 percent does not cover inflation, or the expansion of skills needed as medical technology and procedures become more sophisticated.

Ninety radiographers at four Auckland hospitals who are also APEX members, struck for four days October 29, and again for two days November 14, demanding a 10.3 percent wage increase. A third four-day strike planned for November 27 was called off at the last minute after the health board bosses agreed to enter arbitration talks with the union.

The radiographers, who perform X-rays and other diagnostic procedures, point to their mounting workload resulting from staff shortages. Nationwide, 13 percent of radiographers' jobs are vacant, as higher pay rates overseas and in private facilities attract staff away from public hospitals.

The health board has responded to the radiographers' actions with an aggressive campaign backed by the big-business press attempting to highlight the "disruption" caused by the strikes. X-rays are needed for 80 percent of patients, especially accident and emergency cases.



February 2001 picket line by locked-out hospital cleaners outside main hospital in Wellington, New Zealand. Over the past year, workers have struck public hospitals across the country in fight for better wages and working conditions.

The board placed advertisements in Australian newspapers to recruit radiographers to cover the November 27 strike. They also paid private facilities to provide X-ray services and hired radiographers from elsewhere in New Zealand. The employers offered pay rates of NZ\$44 per hour, as opposed to the usual NZ\$17, with airfares and hotels thrown in. The Australian radiographers' union, the Health Services Union of Australia, responded by urging their members not to take up this offer, and extended their support to APEX.

Four Auckland hospitals were also hit with

strike action by 230 orderlies, kitchen staff, and home aides in July, who walked out for two days and picketed to protest the health board's offer of a 2 percent pay increase. Hospital managers were forced to move patients around and deliver boxed meals.

Protest action by workers involved in mental health care, who are members of the Public Service Association, has also drawn attention to the severe crisis in providing these services. They have taken various actions since March, including refusing to work if there are too many patients for them to care for. The unionists point to conditions that are

unsafe for patients and staff, with overcrowding at emergency care facilities forcing acutely ill patients to be transferred around the country, housed on mattresses on the floor, placed in unsuitable general hospital wards, or in frequent instances, in local jails.

A number of health-care workers have made significant gains as a result of their actions. Last December, for example, after 3,000 Christchurch region nurses and other hospital workers struck for two days, a 6 percent pay raise was won for the nurses, with a further 2 percent this year and next.

That same month, radiation therapists, who treat cancer patients, struck for 48 hours in Auckland, Hamilton, and Palmerston North over their contract. Their action drew attention to the outrageous waiting times for radiation therapy caused by shortages of radiotherapists.

In Auckland, as radiation machines sit idle for lack of staff, half of all cancer sufferers are waiting six weeks for treatment, and many up to 18 weeks. Mastectomy rates for breast cancer are rising because other medical procedures are not available. As publicity grew about the treatment crisis, the government arranged for patients from regions with the longest waiting lists to be flown to Australia for medical care.

In January, the Auckland radiation therapists cancelled plans for a further seven-day strike and accepted pay increases of 20 percent to 25 percent, with similar settlements in the other regions.

Meanwhile, Health Minister King announced on November 21, the week prior to the radiographers' planned third strike, that the government was stepping in to provide funds to health boards to wipe out their budget deficits by next July.

*Felicity Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union.*

## Locked-out workers in Welsh auto parts plant celebrate victory in 'unfair dismissal' case

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—Still celebrating victory in their "unfair dismissal" case before an industrial tribunal, workers at the Friction Dynamics auto parts plant at Caernarfon in north Wales have resumed picketing the company, which locked them out 19 months ago. The 87 workers have said that they will maintain their pickets until the New Year, the deadline for the company to appeal the ruling.

The tribunal's decision in favor of the workers' claim of "unfair dismissal" was reported to a November 13 victory rally at the local football club. Tom Jones, local secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), told the cheering workers to be proud of what they had achieved. At a subsequent date the tribunal will decide whether to award the workers with compensation.

The workers were locked out in April of last year after staging a week-long strike against company proposals to cut wages by 15 percent and introduce longer working days with no overtime. The bosses also sought to restrict union meetings and cut down the number of shop stewards in the plant.

Scabs were brought in to continue production. One of them lost the thumb and all the fingers of his right hand to a metal rolling machine in October of last year.

"Expectation of victory [against the lock-out] is still as high as the day we set out," said David Elwyn, a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union. "I would like to be reinstated." Along with other union fighters, Elwyn had joined a rally outside the tribunal when it opened on October 7, as the workers made use of different outlets

to build support for their fight.

At that time unionist Searle Owen described the struggle as "a fight over working conditions," and "a fight for future generations—for their dignity. The boss wanted to change our shift patterns, he tried to divide us and tried to oust our union," he said. "He told us, 'I'm going to teach you a new culture.' We said, 'we've already got one—we're Welsh.'"

"We're delighted," said Gerald Parry in a phone interview following the news of the victory.

He added his opinion that "it is unlikely that the boss will reinstate us."

"The law allows employers to sack workers eight weeks into an industrial dispute," he said. "This is a big issue for the rest of the labor movement, for the workers who are taking action over bosses' attempts to cut final salary pensions and replace them with pensions that are worth less. More and more unions are having to fight over this issue as employers are trying to cut the wages we earn."

Commenting on the union's 18-month battle and the victory at the tribunal, John Davies, a worker at the plant for 34 years, said, "I thought it would only last two or three weeks at the most." He reported that "unions throughout Britain and even Ireland have been sending money to us and have said that they hope it keeps us going." The struggle "has been worth it," he said.

In line with their ongoing attempts to build links with other union struggles, a delegation of the locked-out workers visited a picket line of the Fire Brigades Union, during the firefighters' first 48-hour strike in mid-November. "We took down some food and drink for them and we invited them to come to the meeting we held where we announced the result of our industrial tribunal," Parry said.

Union members are now planning a victory celebration rally in Caernarfon on January 25. For more details, contact the TGWU at 17 Sergontium Terrace, Caernarfon, north Wales.

*Paul Davies is a meat packer in London.*

## Framed-up Cuban patriots demand new U.S. trial

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA—Speaking at a news conference here, an attorney defending one of the five Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. prisons reported on the motion for a new trial that was recently filed on their behalf. Paul McKenna, attorney for Gerardo Hernández, said he had joined Leonard Weinglass, who on November 12 filed a motion in a federal district court in Miami on behalf of Antonio Guerrero. The lawyers representing the other three will also join in, he said.

The federal government never proved any illegal actions by the five Cubans. Instead, it pushed through a series of "conspiracy" charges against them, including conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign power, to commit espionage for Cuba, and—in the case of Hernández—to commit murder. Hernández was given a double life sentence; Guerrero and Ramón Labañino, a life sentence; Fernando González, a jail term of 19 years; and René González, 15 years.

McKenna explained that the new motion

is based on the fact that the five defendants were denied a fair trial by the court's refusal to grant a defense request to move the proceedings to a city outside Miami, where it was virtually impossible to conduct an impartial trial. For months before the trial, which concluded in June 2001, the defendants were tried and convicted in the big-business media, which carried out a smear campaign against them and the Cuban Revolution. Jurors, especially Cuban-Americans, had reason to fear reprisals if they voted "not guilty."

The five Cuban revolutionaries were carrying out a mission in the United States to defend their country and revolution by gathering information about the activities of counterrevolutionary groups operating in the United States with a long history of organizing violent attacks against Cuba with the complicity of the U.S. government.

"We never tried to deny that our clients were foreign agents and that they had false documents. The sentences for these kinds of crimes are minor, the maximum sentencing for them is five years, and generally, in

the history of these cases, the people involved are normally returned" to their countries, said McKenna.

"I believe that these men are innocent, and they are patriots, and we have to recognize their courage," he added.

The imprisoned Cubans all have a record of revolutionary activity, with the mission to infiltrate the ultrarightist groups being among their most dangerous. Hernández, Fernando González, and René González joined with other Cuban volunteer combatants to help defeat the invasion of Angola by the apartheid regime's army in the late 1980s. Several distinguished themselves in Cuba as leaders of the high school student federation or the Union of Young Communists.

McKenna reported that Gerardo Hernández's wife, Adriana Hernández, has not been allowed to see her husband for five years, a denial of the "fundamental human right to allow the family to see anyone in jail," he said.

An international campaign is being waged to tell the truth about the five Cuban prisoners and to demand their immediate release.



# Irish in Scotland stand up to rulers' chauvinist campaign

BY PETE WILLIAMSON

DUNDEE, Scotland—Defenders of Irish national rights in Scotland are refusing to be pushed back by a government-led campaign against the growing expressions of Irish nationalism here. Scotland has a substantial Irish population that has been subjected to second-class status.

This chauvinist campaign is being carried out in the name of combating "sectarianism." While decrying efforts to impose "sectarian" religious views on others—Protestant or Catholic—officials have in practice used the term as a cover for targeting Irish nationalists.

In recent months, government officials have branded Irish marches in Scotland as "sectarian." Authorities suspended the license of a pub that police claimed had "memorabilia and music" supporting the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Cops have seized Irish and Palestinian flags from fans of the Celtic team at football (soccer) games.

Joining the anti-Irish campaign, First Minister Jack McConnell of Scotland has proclaimed his determination to "end an attitude which, like racism, is a stain on Scotland's reputation." McConnell has worked with the directors of football clubs to ban the sale of "paramilitary" flags outside football grounds—supposedly referring to the IRA and rightist pro-British groups. The Scottish executive (government) is also considering legislation that would supposedly combat "sectarianism."

Jim Slaven, a leader of the James Connolly Society, Scotland's main Irish republican organization, condemned these moves. "We believe most of the examples they give as sectarianism are legitimate expressions of the Irish," he said in an interview. "The real issue is that the Irish themselves are victims of sectarianism, and they [government officials] do nothing to deal with the intolerance to the Irish." Slaven said his organization, along with others in the Republican Commemoration Committee, had no intention of pulling back from the regular marches they organize.

This initiative by the Scottish government coincides with the British rulers' efforts to weaken gains made by Irish nationalists in the six British-occupied counties of northern Ireland.

In October, claiming that Sinn Fein was running a spy operation, London unilaterally closed down the Northern Ireland Assembly—a body in the north with limited self-government powers—and reimposed direct British rule there. Leaders of Sinn Fein, the party leading the fight for the unification of Ireland, have denounced the British government for trying to demonize them. Meanwhile, rightist supporters of British rule have stepped up their violent assaults on Irish Catholic areas in Belfast.

Slaven remarked, "The direction and tone

of the debate on 'sectarianism' in Scotland is part of a long-term campaign by the British government to label the conflict in the north of Ireland as sectarian. It is another attempt by the British to portray themselves as neutral in the face of two warring factions."

## 16 percent of Scottish population

The Irish are Scotland's largest immigrant group. Coming mainly from nearby northern Ireland, they make up an estimated 16 percent of the total population. Since the first waves of mass emigration at the time of the Irish famine in the 1840s, they have predominantly been concentrated in lower-paying jobs in the central belt of Scotland, from Glasgow through to Edinburgh.

Workers of Irish descent in Scotland have been subjected to a system of job discrimination—parallel to that in the British-occupied north of Ireland—that has excluded them from key skilled jobs such as in shipbuilding, which were reserved for workers of Protestant origin.

This job discrimination has at times been reinforced by anti-Irish campaigns fostered by London. For example, in 1935 anti-Catholic riots took place in Edinburgh after the Scottish General Assembly declared that the *Judenfrage* (Jewish question) in Nazi Germany was akin to Scotland's *Irishfrage* (Irish question). As in northern Ireland, the pro-British and anti-Catholic Orange Order continues to hold parades in Scotland.

Today, however, the rise of confidence among workers who are Irish, combined with the decline of the traditional industries where discrimination of Irish workers was concentrated, has weakened this system of discrimination and divisions that serves the interests of the employers.

"It's anti-Irish racism," said Paul Steele, a leader of the Volunteer Tom Williams Republican Flute Band from Glasgow, referring to the government's campaign against "sectarianism." He explained, "Every time we have a parade, the police and media brand us as sectarian. It's not about religion, though, because we have Protestants in the band—it's because we're Irish."

Steele said the Irish flute bands in Scotland really took off after the 1981 hunger strikes by Irish republican prisoners in British jails, one of the high points of the national struggle in Ireland. His band, named after an Irish republican executed by the British in 1942, regularly plays at Irish parades in Scotland and travels frequently to Ireland.

The band has raised funds for Irish prisoners held under British rule. On May 27, 2001, some 5,000 people led by the flute bands marched through Glasgow's city center to commemorate the Irish hunger strike. On June 8 of this year 2,000 people marched in Edinburgh, having pushed back police



Militant/Pete Williamson

Some 2,000 supporters of the Irish freedom struggle joined march in Glasgow, Scotland, on May 5, 2002. Scottish first minister smears such actions as "sectarian."

attempts to restrict the flying of Irish flags.

## Confidence among Irish workers

These marches reflect a broader confidence among working people of Irish Catholic background, including the refusal to be pushed out of jobs by the anti-Irish abuse that is prevalent in workplaces in the central belt. As a result, anti-Irish abuse is being pushed more to the background.

First Minister McConnell's focus on trying to restrict flags at football games is an effort to undermine the increased confidence expressed by supporters of the Celtic football club. An article in the *Scottish Sun*, for example, complained that their matches are like Irish theme days.

The Celtic club, whose foundation is historically linked to the Irish independence struggle, has continued to fly Irish flags from its masts, despite occasional government moves. At games its supporters sing the Irish national anthem as well as songs of the Irish freedom struggle, and some display banners and flags supporting the fight against British rule in Ireland. Steele reports that in recent years Palestinian and Basque flags have also been flown by some in the crowd.

The other main football club in Glasgow is Rangers, whose fans display the British Union Jack flag as well as banners associated with the rightist paramilitaries in the north of Ireland, and sometimes Israeli flags. They often sing anti-Irish songs. In 1999 the vice chair of the team, prominent Scottish lawyer Donald Findlay, was forced to resign after it was revealed he sang anti-Irish songs at a celebration. As a lawyer Findlay has defended several Rangers supporters

charged with knife attacks on Celtic supporters. Each of these clubs attracts up to 60,000 to their home games.

According to the *Scottish Mirror*, several of the eight "sectarian" murders reported in Scotland in 1999–2000 took place after games involving these teams. This expression of the divisions fostered by the British rulers among working people and expressed through football loyalties is paralleled with teams in Edinburgh.

Scottish justice minister James Wallace used clashes after an October 6 Celtic-Rangers football game to announce new laws to punish "sectarianism." According to the *Glasgow Herald*, the Scottish government is likely to incorporate an amendment by a Liberal Democrat member of the Scottish Parliament, Donald Gorrie, into a "criminal justice" bill currently going through the legislature. The amendment would consider any "criminal" offense as aggravated if it was deemed to have a "sectarian or religious hatred" element, and would impose a harsher penalty. The bill would also require companies and government offices to draw up a code of conduct to combat "sectarianism."

Slaven responded, "The Scottish Executive won't even recognize the Irish in Scotland. They view us as Catholic—they don't recognize us as an ethnic group. They have a billboard campaign proclaiming that Scotland is a land of many cultures, but they don't want to touch anything to do with the Irish."

Slaven says the James Connolly Society intends to challenge the Scottish Executive on their claim that anti-Irish discrimination no longer exists.

## Vancouver grain handlers fight three-month lockout by bosses

BY JOE YOUNG

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—Some 650 grain handlers, members of Local 333 of the Grain Workers Union, have been fighting an employer lockout here since August 25. They have been without a contract since Jan. 1, 2001.

The employers are demanding major concessions. These include scheduling 10-hour workdays and six-day weeks and eliminating lifetime seniority. The union says this will lead to the elimination of 20 percent of the workforce.

The bosses are taking advantage of low grain volumes due to a drought on the Prairies to try to starve out the grain handlers. They have been shipping what grain there is through the port of Prince Rupert, hundreds of miles north of Vancouver. The 85 unionists in Prince Rupert have a separate contract, which expires in January.

Early in September unionists from Vancouver put up picket lines at the Prince Rupert terminal, stopping the flow of grain. Within two days, however, the companies got a court injunction barring picketing on the pretext that the terminal in Prince Rupert is a separate entity, although the same companies that operate the terminals in Vancouver own it.

The British Columbia Court of Appeal overturned this injunction and pickets went up again at midnight on November 6. The

companies immediately applied to the Canadian Industrial Relations Board to have the picket action declared an illegal strike. The Board ruled that the union members in Prince Rupert would have to cross the line or face fines of \$1,000 a day. In the face of this the union in Vancouver lifted the pickets after a few days.

Grain handlers on the picket line reacted angrily to the decision of the board. Glen Last, who has worked 23 years at the James Richardson terminal on Vancouver's north shore, said the CIRB decision was "unfair and biased. They're more company oriented than independent." He added, "It took 11 weeks to get a decision that there could be picketing and four days to undo it." Asked about the prospects for the union fight he replied, "Whatever it takes. It depends on how they play the game and how it hurts them. They want everyone working for \$8 an hour."

Inder Parmar, who works at the Saskatchewan Pool terminal, commented, "We are in a bad position. The crops were not that good. But if we picket Prince Rupert, it might hurt them a little bit."

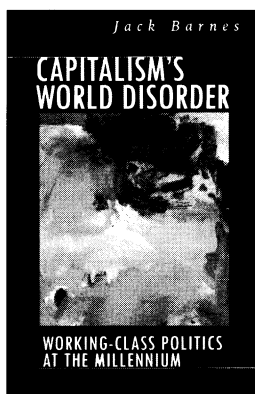
The contract for the 2,000 longshore workers in Vancouver, organized by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, (ILWU) expires at the end of the year.

Joe Young is a meat packer in Langley, British Columbia.

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# 1877 strike: first nationwide U.S. labor revolt

Printed below is an excerpt from *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* by Philip Foner, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. In July 1877, five years into a depression, railroad workers in Martinsburg, West Virginia, went out on strike over the latest in a series of wage cuts. The strike spread rapidly and effectively shut down the entire U.S. rail system.

The railroad strikes carried the spark of rebellion to other workers and the unemployed, and within days more than 100,000 were on strike nationwide; in St. Louis it became a general strike. Only by unleashing the state militia and U.S. army were the bosses able to defeat the strikers in the first generalized confrontation between capital and labor

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

in the history of the country. Copyright © 1977. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

### BY PHILIP FONER

Saturday, July 21, a day long to be remembered by Pittsburghers, dawned bright and beautiful. The strikers had remained stationed along the line during the entire night. Early the next morning, they were joined by rolling-mill men, mechanics, the unemployed, and women and children. Regiments of the Pittsburgh militia were stationed near the strikers and their sympathizers. The soldiers joked and fraternized with the crowd. Most of the time their arms were stacked. The strikers let them know that they would resist any attempt to start a freight train out

under the doubleheader order.

It was the custom for the different mills and shops in Pittsburgh and its vicinity to shut down at about noon on Saturday. Fearing that the sudden increase in the crowd following such shutdowns would create complications, several Pittsburgh manufacturers approached Vice-President Cassatt and urged him not to attempt to open the road that afternoon, but rather to wait until Monday afternoon, when the mills would be operating.

They pointed out that it was natural that the local militia "should sympathize with the strikers" and therefore could not be depended upon in case of a riot. To call in the Philadelphia troops under these circumstances, they insisted, was fraught with the utmost danger.

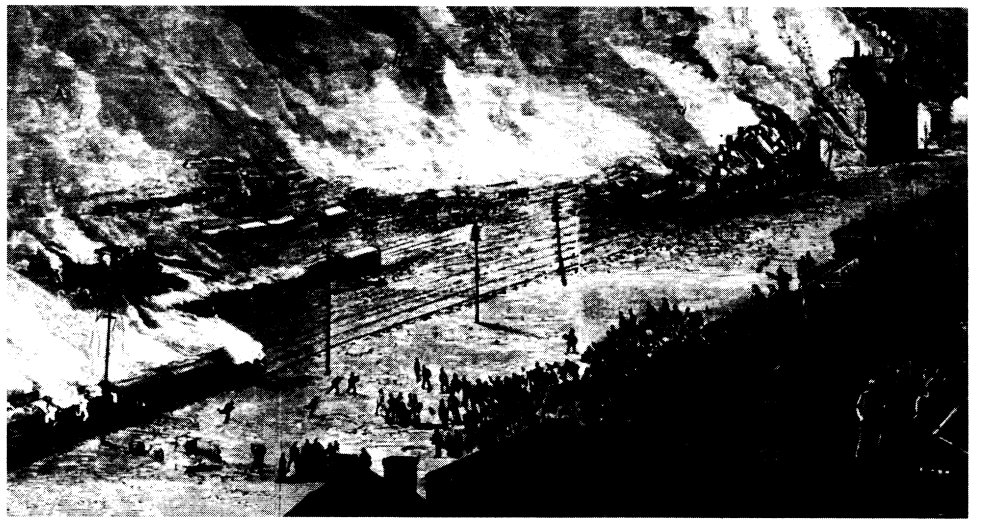
### Arrival of the troops

At about one o'clock in the afternoon of July 21, a passenger train arrived at the Pittsburgh Union Depot. From six cars, uniformed Philadelphians emerged, armed and equipped with blankets. An hour later, another train arrived with several hundred more Philadelphians. The six hundred soldiers were furnished with refreshments at the depot; and when news came that the railroad officials wanted to send out a freight train immediately, the order was given for the Philadelphia troops to occupy those positions at which the most resistance was likely to come from the strikers and their sympathizers.

The news of the troop's arrival brought a vast assemblage of men, women, and children to the Outer Depot, where the freight trains lay idle. The crowd was quiet and orderly. At five o'clock in the afternoon, cries of "There they come!" arose. All eyes were turned toward the Union Depot. In the distance was seen a solid column of soldiers, marching steadily toward the Outer Depot, their bayonets glistening in the sun.

At the head of the soldiers were Superintendent Pitcairn of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Sheriff Fife, and a posse of constables and police officers. The sheriff, the constables, and the police were accompanying the troops to arrest the strike leaders on a warrant issued by Judge Ewing at the request of solicitors for the Pennsylvania Railroad. The unnamed ringleaders were charged with riot.

As the troops approached the Outer Depot, the silence was broken by a storm of hisses, hoots, and yells. The women led the



During 1877 walkout, workers in Pittsburgh torch the property of the Pennsylvania Railroad. More than 100,000 rail workers and others walked out in first national strike.

hissing and urged the men to outdo them in jeering at the Philadelphians. As the soldiers began pushing the crowd back so as to clear the tracks, the cries and yells grew louder and fiercer. Regiments of the local militia mingled with the crowd, and a number of its members urged the Philadelphians to "take it easy." Several strikers joined the refrain, and one shouted, "You sympathize with our cause, and you wouldn't shoot a workingman!"

At that very moment, an order was issued to the Philadelphia "Dark Blues" to charge with fixed bayonets. The soldiers responded, and several people were stabbed. When the crowd saw the blood trickling from these men, an angry roar arose. At this point, several boys let loose a volley of stones at the soldiers.

The command "Fire!" rang out, and immediately the troops began firing directly into the crowd. The panic-stricken men, women, and children, trapped and unarmed, surged in all directions, and several fell....

Within a few minutes, at least twenty were dead (including one member of Pittsburgh's Sixth Division) and twenty-nine maimed or wounded by the Philadelphia citizen-soldiers. The dead included a woman and three small children. A grand jury investigation termed the action of the troops "an unauthorized, willful and wanton killing...which the inquest can call by no other name than murder."

### Workers control the city

As the word of the massacre spread through the city, thousands of workers from the rolling mills, coal mines, and factories

hurried to the scene of the killings. The angry crowds forced the Philadelphians to retreat to the roundhouse, where a siege began. Within fifteen minutes, the crowd had broken every window in the building. Only a last-minute decision prevented the soldiers from responding with the Gatling guns. A wagon bringing food for the soldiers was seized by the crowd.

With the Sixth Division practically disbanded, the police nowhere to be found, and the Philadelphia militiamen besieged in the roundhouse, the crowd had full control of the city. The aroused citizenry, determined to avenge the murders, put the railroad's property to the torch. The fire alarms were cut, but an alarm was somehow sent in. The first department responded, but upon arriving within a block of the fire, the engines were stopped by the crowd. Meanwhile, the striking of the alarms was a signal for thousands of additional people from all parts of the city to proceed to the scene of the blaze....

In its report, the state legislative committee stressed the role of the women in urging "the mob to resistance," and pointed out that "during Saturday night and Sunday, they [the women] brought tea and coffee to the men engaged in the destruction of property and were the most active in carrying away goods taken from the cars."

What the report failed to mention was that in the testimony it took, the fact was emphasized that if the goods had not been taken, they would have been destroyed by fire.

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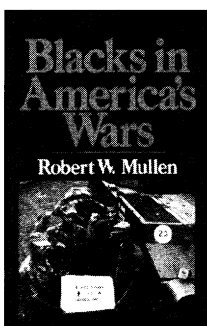
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# Firefighters in UK call London rally

Continued from front page

LGA. They said that other stoppages planned for the weeks leading up to the Christmas holiday will proceed.

While initial media coverage of the strikes focused on the workers' demand for a 40 percent wage rise, firefighters themselves stressed that jobs, along with the quality and extent of firefighting services, were also key issues. Prescott's November 26 statement confirmed the unionists' view.

Speaking before parliament, the politician claimed that job cuts would be made possible through increases in overtime, cut-backs on fire cover during the nighttime, when fewer fires take place, and other changes in firefighters' shift patterns. In response, the FBU pointed out that substantially more deaths and serious injuries occur at night—along with casualties among the very young and the elderly.

The union's national officer, John McGhee, opposed both the cuts and the use of overtime to make up for job losses. Speaking on the BBC's Newsnight program, he said that the FBU's overtime ban had created 5,000 jobs.

Prescott's deputy, Nicholas Raynsford, defended the job cuts, saying they were a necessary part of the creation of a leaner, smaller fire service.

## Firefighters: no jobs-pay trade-off

Picketing firefighters have emphasized the centrality of the jobs question to their fight. "Job cuts mean fewer people on less fire engines going to the same number of fires," said Mark Steer, a firefighter at the Hammersmith fire station picket line. "I'm totally opposed to job cuts to give us a pay rise," said his fellow unionist, Howard Edge, to the BBC.

Having intervened to torpedo a possible settlement, government ministers have continued to play a leading part in trying to undermine the strikers' confidence and

weaken solidarity with their fight. "This is a strike they can't win," said Prime Minister Anthony Blair on November 25. Should the firefighters win their demands, he added, "it would not be a defeat for the government, it would be a defeat for the country."

Playing on the fears of millions of working people about the perilous state of the UK economy, Blair "insisted that there would be 'dire' consequences for economic stability if the government gave way to unfunded pay rises," reported the *Financial Times*.

Echoing that position, Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown described the 16 percent raise scuttled by the government the previous week as "simply unaffordable."

Bank of England head Edward George weighed in against the firefighters in similar terms, reported the *Guardian* newspaper, in a November 26 meeting with lower-ranked government parliamentarians. The ruling class figure warned of "copycat claims across the public sector" and said that the "knock-on effects of satisfying the firefighters' pay demand would damage the economy."

## Expressions of union solidarity

Firefighters picketing the Barking fire station in East London on November 26 told *Militant* reporters that they expect to be on the picket lines past Christmas.

At the Hadleigh fire station in Essex, pickets reported that a factory gate collection organized by the Transport and General Workers' Union at the nearby New Holland tractor plant in Basildon had raised £1,000 for the firefighters' hardship fund (£1 = \$1.55).

Some 50 members of the National Union of Teachers in the London borough of Islington joined the firefighters' Upper Street picket line on November 26. Their act of solidarity took place as 60,000 teachers through-



Militant/Pete Williamson

**Firefighters rally in Glasgow, Scotland. Some 50,000 firefighters carried out an eight-day walkout in November in spite of government strikebreaking.**

out London took strike action in support of their claim for a £3,000 increase in the annual allowance that compensates them for the extra costs of living in London. The strikers closed some 1,800 schools during the biggest such action in 30 years. Firefighters joined the teachers' rally and demonstration that wound its way from Lincoln's Inn Fields to the Oval cricket ground. An FBU representative spoke at the rally.

London council workers took strike action on the same day. Also on November 26, 2,000 ambulance crew staff in West Yorkshire staged a 24-hour overtime ban to reinforce their demand for improved wages and conditions. Along with their counterparts in Humberside and Merseyside, the workers are threatening further action over Christmas and the New Year.

Meanwhile, auto production workers at Peugeot and white collar workers at Jaguar are to ballot for strike action over wages.

Reflecting the rulers' concern at these

developments, *Financial Times* commentator Martin Wolf supported the government's "tough line" in his "Comment and analysis" column in the November 25 issue of the big-business daily.

"A government's monopoly over coercive power is the basis of civilised life," Wolf wrote as he warned Blair against those who advise a settlement with the FBU. "The government must not listen to these seducers," he stated. "If it were to fund a more expensive deal for the firefighters, it would soon have the rest of the public services on its doorstep. Each surrender would make resisting the next one more costly. The turmoil would grow, not diminish."

"The threat is particularly serious for this government," wrote Wolf. "Any Labour government finds relations with its trade union paymasters difficult; this one's chief aim is reform of the public services; and that must include reform of public sector pay. The strike threatens the government on all these fronts."

# 'Cuba-Africa' U.S. tour reaches thousands

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—About 75 people attended a November 16 reception here for Victor Dreke and Ana Morales, the final event of a month-long speaking tour by the two Cubans on university campuses in the South and on the East Coast.

Among those in attendance were members of the diplomatic staffs of several Latin American countries, activists in the fight to get the U.S. Navy off the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, Congressional staff members, leaders of Cuba solidarity committees in the area, and many individuals who had worked to make the speaking engagements a success in numerous cities.

The reception was held at the Cuban Interests Section. Introducing Dreke and Morales, Cuban ambassador Dagoberto Rodríguez noted that not since the 1959 revolution has any Cuban leader of Dreke's stature had the opportunity to speak so widely in the United States. The tour showed the increasing possibilities to speak to people in this country about the Cuban Revolution, he remarked, underscoring the special interest in Cuba and its internationalism in Africa. The two Cubans spoke on university campuses in seven states and the District of Columbia, where their tour began.

Dreke, who spoke on "Cuba and Africa: From 1959 to Today," has been a leading cadre of the Cuban Revolution for five decades. He fought in the revolutionary war that overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. In the early 1960s he was a commander of the Cuban forces that crushed the CIA-backed counterrevolutionary bands that operated in the Escambray mountains of central Cuba. He was second in command under Ernesto Che Guevara of the unit of Cuban volunteer combatants that fought in the Congo alongside anti-imperialist forces there. He led Cuban volunteers in Guinea-Bissau during the independence struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. Today he remains involved in Cuba's solidarity work in Africa.

Ana Morales, a doctor who has led Cuban medical missions in Africa, shared the platform with Dreke during the tour.

Many of those who organized speaking engagements for Dreke and Morales in the Washington area attended the reception. Among them were Philip Brenner, a professor at American University; Leo Bowman, a teacher at Bancker High School;

Tom Headley, an Amtrak engineer; Shawntel Hebert, a student leader at Howard University; Ken Morgan, a graduate student at Morgan State University; and Banbose Shango of the D.C.-Havana Sister City Project.

Also in attendance were Leslie Salgado and Frank Pratkanis, leaders of the Maryland Cuba Coalition, who organized a car caravan to come down from nearby Baltimore. Flavio Cumpiano, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, thanked Dreke for Cuba's "consistent support" to the Puerto Rican struggle.

In the Washington area, the Cuban speakers addressed audiences at the College of Notre Dame, University of Maryland Baltimore County, American University, and Howard University. They also spoke to classes at Benjamin Banneker High School and met with a group of railroad workers.

In Georgia they spoke at Clark Atlanta University and Spelman College, and at a citywide meeting at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. They attended a luncheon with Black civil rights leaders hosted by Georgia legislator Tyrone Brooks, visited the lynching photography exhibit, and spent a day in Valdosta, Georgia, where they were hosted by local Black farmers and addressed a meeting of the People's Tribunal.

In Alabama Dreke and Morales spoke at the University of Alabama campuses in Birmingham and Tuscaloosa and at Miles College. They also toured the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, where they were hosted by president emeritus Odessa Woolfolk and many civil rights leaders. They visited the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Epes.

In New York City they were introduced by Professor Manning Marable to speak to a conference at Columbia University entitled, "Forty Acres and a Mule: The Case for Black Reparations." The conference was sponsored by the university's Institute for Research in African-American Studies and The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Noted civil rights attorney Lennox Hinds hosted a reception for them in Harlem.

They also spoke at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

The highlight of the reception was Dreke's enthusiastic, impromptu remarks

about the meetings they had addressed in Tampa and Miami, Florida, just a few days earlier. His comments were marked by an appreciation of what had been accomplished, with fitting humor and a celebratory note.

For several days before the meetings, opponents of the Cuban Revolution attempted to get them called off. Failing to accomplish that, they attended the meetings in each city attempting to prevent a civil discussion from taking place.

Dreke gave a special thanks to the broad coalition of faculty and students that made successful meetings possible at the University of South Florida in Tampa and at Florida International University in Miami, noting that they showed that even in Miami "Cuba's voice" can be heard.

He expressed his appreciation for the seriousness of the discussions on the tour, and even the "difficult" questions some asked.

"Sometimes people thought we were angry at them. Sometimes they were angry at us because they didn't like the answer we gave. But we told everyone we are here to answer any question and they should not be afraid to ask anything," Dreke said.

Altogether, well over 3,000 people heard the Cuban revolutionaries speak, bringing their own firsthand experiences from Cuba and Africa to interested young people in the United States who rarely have the opportunity for such an exchange.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### MICHIGAN Detroit

**Report from the Guadalajara International Book Fair and Celebration of Publication of New Edition of *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*.** Speaker: Don Mackle, participant in sales team representing Pathfinder Press. Fri., Dec. 13, Dinner 6:30 p.m. Program 7:30 p.m. 4208 W. Vernor. Donation: \$4 program; \$6 dinner. Tel: (313) 554-0504.

### NEW JERSEY Newark

**Oppose Attacks on Workers' Rights: Arrests of Airport Workers in Newark Targets Immigrants.** Fri., Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m. 168 Bloomfield, 2nd Floor. Donation: \$5. Tel: (973) 481-0077.

### NEW YORK Upper Manhattan

**Support Transit Workers Fight for Decent Contract and Safety Rights.** Speaker: Stu Singer, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m. 599 W. 187th Street, 2nd Floor. Donation: \$5. Tel: (212) 740-4611.

### NEW ZEALAND Auckland

**Building Revolutionary Alliances of the Working Class with Working Farmers and Oppressed Nations in the Fight Against Imperialism.** Speakers: Leaders of the Communist League and Young Socialists. Sat., Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m. Otahuhu Community Centre, 10 High St., Otahuhu. Donation: \$5. Tel: (09) 276-8885.

## —CALENDAR—

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

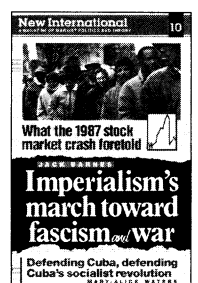
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in New International no. 10

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- **What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold**
- **Defending Cuba, Defending Cuba's Socialist Revolution** by Mary-Alice Waters
- **The Curve of Capitalist Development** by Leon Trotsky \$14.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.



# Trotsky on unions in face of imperialist decay

Printed below is an excerpt from *Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay* by Leon Trotsky. The piece quoted is from an unfinished article found in Trotsky's desk after his assassination in August 1940. The central question it discusses—the need for “complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state”—is as pressing an issue today as when Trotsky wrote this article more than 60 years ago. Copyright © 1969, 1990 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY LEON TROTSKY

There is one common feature in the development, or more correctly the degeneration, of modern trade union organizations throughout the world: it is their drawing close to and growing together with the state power. This process is equally characteristic of the neutral, the Social Democratic, the Communist, and “anarchist” trade unions. This fact alone shows that the tendency toward “growing together” is intrinsic not in this or that doctrine as such but derives from social conditions common for all unions.

Monopoly capitalism does not rest on competition and free private initiative but on centralized command. The capitalist cliques at the head of mighty trusts, syndicates, banking consortiums, and so on, view economic life from the very same heights as does state power; and they require at every step the collaboration of the latter. In their turn the trade unions in the most important branches of industry find themselves deprived of the possibility of profiting from the competition among the different enterprises. They have to confront a centralized capitalist adversary, intimately bound up with state power. Hence flows the need of the trade unions—insofar as they remain on reformist positions, that is, on positions of adapting themselves to private property—to adapt themselves to the capitalist state and to contend for its cooperation.

In the eyes of the bureaucracy of the trade union movement, the chief task lies in “freeing” the state from the embrace of capitalism, in weakening its dependence on trusts, in pulling it over to their side. This position is in complete harmony with the social position of the labor aristocracy and the labor bureaucracy, who fight for a crumb in the share of superprofits of imperialist capitalism. The labor bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the “democratic” state how reliable and indispensable they are in peacetime and especially in time of war. By transforming the trade unions into organs of the state, fascism invents nothing new; it merely draws

to their ultimate conclusion the tendencies inherent in imperialism.

Colonial and semicolonial countries are under the sway not of native capitalism but of foreign imperialism. However, this does not weaken but, on the contrary, strengthens the need of direct, daily, practical ties between the magnates of capitalism and the governments that are in essence subject to them: the governments of colonial or semicolonial countries. Inasmuch as imperialist capitalism creates both in colonies and semicolonies a stratum of labor aristocracy and bureaucracy, the latter requires the support of colonial and semicolonial governments as protectors, patrons, and sometimes as arbitrators. This constitutes the most important social basis for the Bonapartist and semi-Bonapartist character of governments in the colonies and in backward countries generally.<sup>1</sup> This likewise constitutes the basis for the dependence of reformist unions upon the state.

## Statization of trade unions

In Mexico the trade unions have been transformed by law into semistate institutions and have, in the nature of things, assumed a semitotalitarian character. The statization of the trade unions was, according to the conception of the legislators, introduced in the interests of the workers, in order to assure them an influence upon governmental and economic life. But insofar as foreign imperialist capitalism dominates the national state and insofar as it is able, with the assistance of internal reactionary forces, to overthrow the unstable democracy and replace it with outright fascist dictatorship, to that extent the legislation relating to the trade unions can easily become a weapon in the hands of imperialist dictatorship.

From the foregoing it seems, at first sight, easy to draw the conclusion that the trade unions cease to be trade unions in the imperialist epoch. They leave almost no room at all for workers' democracy which, in the good old days when free trade ruled on the economic arena, constituted the content of the inner life of labor organizations. In the absence of workers' democracy there cannot be any free struggle for influence over the trade union membership. And because of this, the chief arena of work for revolutionists within the trade unions disappears.

Such a position, however, would be false to the core. We cannot select the arena and the conditions for our activity to suit our own likes and dislikes. It is infinitely more difficult to fight in a totalitarian or a semitotalitarian state for influence over the working masses than in a democracy. The very same thing likewise applies to trade unions, whose fate reflects the change in the destiny of capitalist states. We cannot renounce the struggle for influence over workers in Germany merely because the totalitarian regime makes such work extremely difficult there. We cannot, in precisely the same way, renounce the struggle within the compulsory labor organizations created by fascism. All the less so can we renounce internal systematic work in trade unions of a totalitarian and semitotalitarian type merely because they depend directly or indirectly on the workers' state or because the bureaucracy deprives the revolutionists of the possibility of working freely within these trade unions.

It is necessary to conduct a struggle under all those concrete conditions that have been created by the preceding developments, including by the mistakes of the working class and the crimes of its leaders. In the fascist and semifascist countries it is impossible to carry on revolutionary work that is not underground, illegal, conspiratorial. Within the totalitarian and semitotalitarian unions it is impossible or well-nigh impossible to carry on any except conspiratorial work. It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses, not only against the bourgeoisie, but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: *complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state*. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.

The second slogan is: *trade union democracy*. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization



Sit-down strike by auto workers at General Motors in Flint, Michigan, 1937. “Either the trade unions of our time will serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capital to subordinate and discipline the workers and to obstruct the revolution,” wrote Trotsky, or, “the unions will become tools of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.”

the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.

In other words, the trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, that is, ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of people and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. Either the trade unions of our time will serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capital to subordinate and discipline the workers and to obstruct the revolution or, on the contrary, the unions will become tools of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

## ‘Neutrality of unions is thing of past’

The neutrality of trade unions is completely and irretrievably a thing of the past—gone, together with free bourgeois democracy.

From what has been said, it follows quite clearly that in spite of the progressive degeneration of trade unions and their growing together with the imperialist state, the work within the trade unions not only does not lose any of its importance but remains as before and becomes in a certain sense even more important work than ever for every revolutionary party. The matter at issue is essentially the struggle for influence over the working class. Every organization, every party, every faction that permits itself an ultimistic position in relation to trade unions, that is, in essence turns its back upon the working class merely because of displeasure with its organization, every such organization is destined to perish. And it must be said that it deserves to perish.

Inasmuch as the chief role in backward countries is played not by national but by foreign capitalism, the national bourgeoisie occupies, in the sense of its social position, a much more minor position than corresponds with the development of industry. Inasmuch as foreign capital does not import workers but proletarianizes the native population, the national proletariat soon begins playing the most important role in the life of the country. In these conditions the national government, to the extent that it tries to show resistance to foreign capital, is compelled to a greater or lesser degree to lean on the proletariat. On the other hand, the governments of those backward countries that consider it inescapable or more profitable for themselves to march shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital destroy the labor organizations and institute a more or less totalitarian regime.

Thus, the feebleness of the national bourgeoisie, the absence of traditions of municipal self-government, the pressure of foreign capitalism, and the relatively rapid growth of the proletariat cut the ground from under any kind of stable democratic regime. The governments of backward, that is, colonial and semicolonial countries by and large assume a Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist character; they differ from one another in that some try to orient in a democratic di-

rection, seeking support among workers and peasants, while others install a form close to military-police dictatorship.

This likewise determines the fate of the trade unions. They either stand under the special patronage of the state or they are subjected to cruel persecution. Patronage on the part of the state is dictated by two tasks that confront it: first to draw the working class closer, thus gaining a support for resistance against excessive pretensions on the part of imperialism; and, at the same time, to discipline the workers themselves by placing them under the control of a bureaucracy.

Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of trade unions. It demands of the reformist bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy, who pick up the crumbs from its banquet table, that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class. If that is not achieved, the labor bureaucracy is driven away and replaced by the fascists. Incidentally, all the efforts of the labor aristocracy in the service of imperialism cannot in the long run save them from destruction.

The intensification of class contradictions within each country, the intensification of antagonisms between one country and another, produce a situation in which imperialist capitalism can tolerate (that is, up to a certain time) a reformist bureaucracy only if the latter serves directly as a petty but active stockholder of its imperialist enterprises, of its plans and programs within the country as well as on the world arena. Social reformism must become transformed into social imperialism in order to prolong its existence—but only prolong it, and nothing more. Because along this road there is no way out in general.

Does this mean that in the epoch of imperialism independent trade unions are generally impossible? It would be fundamentally incorrect to pose the question this way. Impossible are the independent or semi-independent reformist trade unions. Wholly possible are revolutionary trade unions that not only are not stockholders of imperialist policy but that set as their task the direct overthrow of the rule of capitalism. In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in addition, the organs of proletarian revolution. In this sense the program of transitional demands adopted by the last congress of the Fourth International is not only the program for the activity of the party; in its fundamental features it is the program for activity of the trade unions.<sup>2</sup>

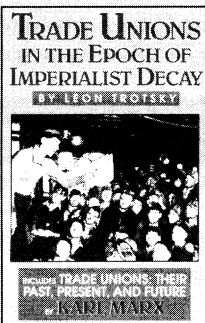
<sup>1</sup>Bonapartism refers to a type of class rule that is dictatorial in form and is usually headed by an individual appearing as a “strong man.” Originating in a period of social crisis or stalemate of contending class forces, a Bonapartist regime tends to elevate itself above the country's classes and acquire a certain independence of action. The term originates from the regime of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in France, 1852–70.

<sup>2</sup>This program, entitled “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International,” is included in Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder, 1977).

## Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

Featuring “Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and future” by Karl Marx

“Apart from their original purposes, the trades unions must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation... They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.” — Karl Marx, 1866



In this book, two central leaders of the modern communist workers movement outline the fight for this revolutionary perspective. \$14.95

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# Must begin with workers' needs

Workers at United and other airlines face a concerted attack by the billionaire owners of that industry. The bosses are demanding more than \$5 billion in wage cuts, loss of paid vacation time, and other takebacks from the 83,000 workers at the airline. They even want to impose a war clause—when Washington goes to war against Iraq, the company could tear up the contract.

The employers' main argument is that workers should consider themselves as part of "the United family" and that when the bosses are losing money, workers must sacrifice for "our" company. Saying the company is on the verge of going broke, the bosses tell workers they have "no choice" but to give up whatever is demanded of them. The federal government is ganging up with the airline magnates against the unions by demanding these union givebacks as a condition for granting more loans to United to stave off bankruptcy.

Workers at one airline after another are facing a similar assault. After the union at USAirways agreed to givebacks, the company filed for bankruptcy anyway and is now using the bankruptcy proceedings as a justification for demanding even more out of the hides of the Machinists and other workers. The record of the past decade shows there is no end to the givebacks—they just whet the bosses' appetite for more blood. The goal of the companies is to drive wages and working conditions way down, as they have in other industries.

The consequences of accepting the framework that "we" workers and bosses have something in common can already be seen. Unionists at United went through the bitter experience of the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) fraud; today they have seen the stock they received in lieu of wages become almost worthless with the plunge in the market. They were told they were part of an "employee-owned airline," but when the chips fall, the real owners—the billionaires—are first in line to get their profits while union members get the axe. All these schemes are designed to tie workers' hands and subordinate our interests to the profit prerogatives of the bosses. There is no such thing as "equal sacrifice" under capitalism—employers profit at the expense of workers. Relying on the good fortunes of the company has been a road to disaster. As the U.S. rulers drive toward an imperialist war in the

Mideast, they will step up even more the demand for "sacrifice" and pressure workers to subordinate themselves to the bosses' needs.

The crisis of the airlines is not a temporary malfunction, nor is it a result of "9-11." It is a normal consequence of the decline of the capitalist system. As the airline owners' profit rates continue to slide, competition among the capitalists becomes sharper, and the employers try to resolve their problems by going after workers.

Rather than tie our future to the employers, working people need a fighting perspective to defend the interests of our class. The road for unionists at United to be able to stand up to the bosses is that of broad working-class solidarity. Their efforts to defend hard-won wages, working conditions, and other rights will be strengthened if they join with other workers resisting the same employer assault—from garment workers fighting for a union to West Coast dockworkers confronting government intervention, to the New York transit workers fighting for health-care benefits and union rights.

In face of growing depression conditions and the looming prospect of massive layoffs, the labor movement needs to wage a fight to demand jobs for all by shortening the workweek with no cut in pay, as well as a massive public works program to create jobs building hospitals, schools, housing, roads, and other needed facilities. Rather than remain at the mercy of individual employers' cutback plans, the only solution in the interests of our class is to fight to expand social security to include a national health-care and pension fund as a universal guarantee for all workers. Unemployment compensation should be available to all workers for the length of time they are out of a job.

Capitalism offers us a future of widening depression, wars of plunder, and increased brutality against working people. The government, under both Democrats and Republicans, acts as an executive committee for the exploiting class. Working people need to organize a movement to fight to take political power out of the hands of the employer class and establish a government of workers and farmers, one that can join with working people worldwide in fighting for a society based on human solidarity and dignity.

# Dockworkers to vote on contract

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

SAN FRANCISCO—Officials of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which represents 10,500 dockworkers on the West Coast, reached an agreement November 24 on a six-year contract with the Pacific Maritime Association, the organization of shipping bosses.

The tentative agreement will be considered by union officials and an assembly of 100 delegates from all union locals on the West Coast, which is scheduled to meet in San Francisco the week of December 9–13. The union will then hold a secret ballot membership ratification vote by longshore workers and marine clerks.

The proposal includes pension increases, a \$3 an hour wage increase over the term of the contract, and a 100 percent employer-paid health benefits package.

The proposed contract would allow the shipping companies to cut jobs through increased use of technology. The jobs of more than 400 marine clerks who keep track of cargo will be eliminated. The employers have promised to avoid laying off any of those clerks by finding other jobs for them.

In 1968, some 13,000 union-registered longshore workers on the West Coast moved 54 million tons. By 2001, less than 7,700 workers moved 253 million tons. During

this period annual tonnage increased almost six-fold. The new provisions on "technology" will allow the shippers to increase this speedup.

The ILWU has been fighting for a contract since the July 1 expiration of the previous agreement. In late September an 11-day boss lockout of union dockworkers closed down all Pacific Coast ports, which handle \$300 billion in cargo a year. The lockout ended October 8 when President George Bush invoked the antiunion Taft-Hartley Act, imposing an 80-day "cooling-off" period. The bosses used the law to threaten the union with penalties if it carried out any job action.

Longshore workers mobilized through demonstrations, picket lines, and other protests to press their contract demands and to oppose the federal government's intervention on the side of the bosses.

Referring to their months-long contract fight, ILWU member Richard Washington said in an interview, "We as longshoremen have other people in the labor movement watching us, so we have much responsibility in this fight. If we falter, if we compromise, it will affect others. Right now we have to be the backbone of the labor movement."

Deborah Liatos is a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 120.

## Palestinian resistance in the occupied West Bank



Right: Palestinian women argue with Israeli soldier at Beit El, north of Ramallah in the West Bank, December 3 after troops killed a 95-year-old woman riding in a taxi that took a road classified as off-limits to Palestinians. Left: students in Jenin throw rocks at Israeli military vehicle enforcing curfew December 2.

# Vietnamese Revolution and antiwar actions

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

In a letter printed in the November 25 *Militant* (see below), reader Chuck Cairns comments on the paper's coverage of the October 26 Washington protest organized under the slogan "Stop the war before it starts." He asks why "the current situation is not analogous" to the period of protests against the Vietnam War.

It's important to avoid separating the history of the anti-Vietnam War movement from the concrete conditions that unfolded at that time. The Vietnamese national liberation struggle, like the Chinese, Algerian, and Cuban Revolutions, was a powerful manifestation of the anticolonial revolution that emerged in Africa, Asia, and Latin America following World War II.

Through a decade and a half the Vietnamese workers and peasants mounted a fierce resistance to Washington's

## REPLY TO A READER

assault. Eventually they forced the withdrawal of U.S. forces, overturned the Saigon regime, and integrated north and south as one workers state, dealing a historic blow to U.S. imperialism.

These events had a big impact on the development of a movement against the war in Vietnam and more broadly on U.S. society. The demonstrations objectively weakened Washington's war effort. Many participants consciously identified with the struggle of the Vietnamese and rooted for their victory. The protests were also intertwined with mass social movements in the United States, from the movement that overthrew Jim Crow segregation in the South to the exploding struggles for women's liberation.

### Bourgeois war pressures and patriotism

There is no revolutionary upsurge in the Mideast today, nor is there a revolutionary leadership there. Also, the Vietnam War events took place during a period of capitalist expansion that began in the late 1940s and lasted through the early 1970s. By contrast, today we are well into a longterm, downward curve of capitalist development, one that marks the dynamics of the class struggle.

This means that, to a far greater extent than three or four decades ago, the world is marked by sharpening rivalry between Washington and the other imperialist powers. Forces in bourgeois politics in each imperialist country appeal to working people to identify with "national" interests. Some express pacifist opposition to the war drive in the name of defending the "real" nation against those who misrepresent it. Under these conditions, slogans such as "regime change begins at home" or "money for jobs, not for war" can take on an American nationalist character, when what is needed above all is to reject the rulers' patriotic framework and to fight for political clarity and a greater class understanding.

Meanwhile, the growing social crisis of capitalism is breeding resistance among workers and farmers. The U.S. rulers can no longer buy class peace by offering a layer of working people modest wage raises and other improvements. Instead, they hold out the prospect of layoffs, cutbacks in social benefits, and attacks on workers' rights.

Communists get a hearing for their explanation that the "we" of the American rulers is a fraud and a trap for working people. The only "we" that workers and farmers should identify with is that of our class brothers and sisters around the world—including those in Iraq. An Iraqi victory in the coming war would strengthen working people everywhere.

A number of those who participate in protests against Washington's war moves are open to considering a revolutionary perspective. Books like Pathfinder's *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* show how millions of workers will revolutionize themselves as political resistance grows, and why only the working class can lead humanity out of the social crisis endemic to capitalism in its decline. Reading, and studying these titles will help such fighters figure out what is behind the brutality of imperialism, and what is required to end it once and for all.

## Letter from a reader

Re your account of the demonstration of October 26: It's true that it contained reactionary elements and that its leadership was hopelessly sectarian. Nevertheless, the size and spirit of the demonstration indicates the potential for a significant mobilization against the currently impending imperialist war.

Many antiwar demonstrations during the Vietnam era also contained backward elements, such as calls for negotiations, the sporting of American flags, and pious avowals of patriotism. Nevertheless, revolutionary socialists recognized the historic value of the antiwar movement and participated energetically. Your article suggests that the current situation is not analogous; if this is your belief, please explain why.

Chuck Cairns  
New Hyde Park, New York

## Hunger rises with crisis in Argentina

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Tucumán province, nestled on the edge of the Andes mountains in northwest Argentina, is known for its lemon, orange, and avocado orchards. The fertile land produces an abundance of potatoes, soybeans, garlic, and strawberries. It has vast sugar cane fields. Last year, local farmers say, the harvests were particularly good.

In the same province, 11 children died of malnutrition in the first two weeks of November.

Pictures of skeleton-like kids in Tucumán have recently appeared in newspapers around the world. While signs of widespread malnutrition in Argentina's provinces were already being reported in the mid-1990s, the situation has rapidly worsened in the last six months with the virtual collapse of Argentina's economy. Record unemployment, skyrocketing prices of food and medicine, and government cutbacks in social services have taken a terrible toll on working people.

"This is not Africa, this is Argentina, where there are 50 million cattle and 39 million people, but where we have a government that is totally out of touch with people's needs," said Dr. Oscar Hillal, deputy director of the children's hospital in Tucumán. Working people in Argentina, who for decades had relatively higher living standards than those in many other Latin American countries, are stunned to witness the sharp rise in infant malnutrition and deaths.

Since last December the devaluation of the national currency has gutted workers' wages and bosses have carried out mass layoffs. Almost half a million have been thrown out of work since January. Imperialist bankers and government officials are pressing the government to pay on its \$141 billion foreign debt. The International Monetary Fund is demanding deep cutbacks on social spending in order for the government to receive new loans. On December 1 President Eduardo Duhalde signed a decree raising gas and electricity rates as part of this austerity package.

Meanwhile, 20,000 children in Tucumán province are starving. Sixty children a month in the province are being taken to the hospital with severe malnutrition, and 400 are being treated on an outpatient basis. The reason: the parents cannot afford to buy enough food and cover other basic needs. Two-thirds of Tucumán's 1.3 million inhabitants live in conditions defined by the government as "extreme poverty."

Héctor Ariel, 21, a sugar-cane cutter in rural Tucumán province, told reporters that six months ago his \$100 monthly wage had been slashed nearly in half, while prices for staple foods doubled or tripled. The company said it was hit by dried-up credit and a plunge in consumption. Ariel now earns just over \$1.50 a day—not enough to feed the family. He and his wife, Beatriz Orresta, 20, have two children who suffer from malnourishment. The seven-month-old baby lies listless in his mother's arms. The two-year-old, wire-thin, keeps losing clumps of hair, she says.

Orresta expressed frustration about not being able to make ends meet. "The food is



Thousands march and block roads in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on November 21 to demand jobs and end to economic policies that have slashed living standards.

there, in the grocery store, but you just can't afford to buy it anymore."

### 11,000 children die every year

A similar situation exists in other provinces outside the capital city of Buenos Aires. In Misiones, 49 children have died of malnutrition this year. In Santa Fe, 134 people, in their majority elderly, have died from hunger this year—triple the number for 2000. Nationally, more than 11,000 children die every year, in their majority from malnutrition or other preventable causes.

Infant mortality rose last year in nine of Argentina's 24 provinces. While infant mortality in the country as a whole was 16.3 per 1,000 live births, the death toll was 24.5 per live births in Tucumán, and in Formosa, to the north, the figure rose to 28.9. Statistics have not yet been released for this year, the worst period of economic crisis.

While the rural provinces are the most affected, major industrial regions have also been devastated by the social crisis. In Mar del Plata, which has one of the highest unemployment levels, 13 percent of babies born in public hospitals weigh less than 5.5 pounds. In one major hospital maternity

ward, half of the mothers suffer from severe anemia, protein deficiency, or other health problems that contribute to infant mortality.

The recession that began in Argentina a few years ago became an economic meltdown late last year. On December 19-20 it sparked a social explosion that forced the resignation of President Fernando de la Rúa. In January Congress appointed Eduardo Duhalde, a Peronist, as president. One of Duhalde's first actions was to devalue the Argentine peso, which for a decade had been pegged to the U.S. dollar.

With the plunge in the peso, workers' wages have lost 70 percent of their purchasing power. Prices for basic necessities have shot up. According to a report by the Argentine Workers Federation (CTA), the monthly cost of a "family shopping basket" has risen to 716 pesos, but most wage workers earn less than 500 pesos a month (US\$143).

As a result of the ongoing wave of layoffs and plant shutdowns, unemployment has reached a record 21.5 percent. If "underemployment" is counted, four out of 10 workers in Argentina have no steady job.

## Gov't 'no-fly' list targets political activists

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

U.S. officials have acknowledged they have what amounts to a "no-fly" list of about 1,000 people deemed a "threat to aviation" who are not allowed to travel on airplanes under any circumstances. Numerous incidents at airports around the country indicate that the U.S. government has a broader list of people who are targeted for special harassment by airport security personnel.

David Steigman, a spokesman for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the newly established federal airport security agency, said in an interview with the online magazine Salon.com, "We have a list of about 1,000 people." It is "composed

of names that are provided to us by various government organizations like the FBI, CIA, and INS.... Each agency decides on its own who is a threat to aviation." The existence of such a list was also confirmed by FBI spokesman Paul Bresson.

Those who have been delayed or barred from flights include Green Party activists, members of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), and people affiliated with Arab or Arab-American groups.

Hussein Ibish, communications director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, said his organization has documented more than 80 cases involving 200 people in which passengers with Arab names have been delayed at airports or prevented from flying.

Dave Lindorff of Salon.com reported that in September, six staff members of the Center for Constitutional Rights were "subjected to intense scrutiny" at the airport in Newark, New Jersey, before being allowed to board the plane. When one of them, Barbara Olshansky, the CCR's assistant legal director, demanded to know why she had been singled out, the airline clerk told her, "The computer spit you out." Olshansky had been harassed several times before by airport security personnel, including one incident last March when she was ordered to pull her pants down while in view of other travelers.

In October two journalists with the San Francisco-based antiwar magazine *War Times*, Rebecca Gordon and Jan Adams, were stopped at the check-in counter of Air

The health crisis is caused not only by the slashing of living standards but the collapse of the public health-care system. More than 90 percent of hospitals in Argentina today face a shortage of basic supplies and equipment such as surgical gloves, syringes, and catheters. They often have to resort to re-sterilizing disposable supplies and rationing X-rays. Many pharmacies, clinics, and hospitals lack antibiotics and other medicines, the prices of which have skyrocketed.

In face of this catastrophe, big-business politicians and commentators have been long on words and short on action. Many have expressed shock at the photos of emaciated children with bloated stomachs. They have voiced concern that this happens in a country that is the fourth-largest food exporter—and that actually increased its exports of meat, wheat, corn, and soy beans this year.

Argentine government officials, however, indignantly refuse to take responsibility for the nutrition and health crisis, blaming it on "mismanagement" by provincial authorities.

"We are not Biafra," huffed Hilda Duhalde, who is in charge of the national government's social welfare programs. To allay critics, the government sent her to Tucumán for three days to launch a new emergency aid program called "Operation Rescue." One of the high points of her visit was the delivery of 350,000 pounds of beef to needy families.

Duhalde acknowledged the donated food was contraband meat, seized at the border by Customs police, that otherwise would have been destroyed. "It's in excellent condition—it's from Europe and Brazil," a Duhalde aide volunteered, in case anyone wondered how long the meat had been stored at Customs.

The First Lady then rushed back to the capital, where the government is busy negotiating a deal with U.S. and European bankers to obtain more loans in exchange for squeezing workers and farmers even further.

A few days earlier, 2,000 jobless workers in Tucumán rallied in front of the provincial government house and carried out several road blockades. They denounced the impending deal with the International Monetary Fund and demanded jobs.

Tran Airlines when a reservation clerk reportedly told them the computer showed them as being on "the FBI No Fly list." The airline then called the FBI and local cops, who held the two writers for some time before allowing them to leave.

"The U.S. government appears to be targeting citizens because of their beliefs," said CCR legal director William Goodman. The organization is preparing a First Amendment lawsuit against this policy. The American Civil Liberties Union has set up a "No Fly List Complaint Form" on its web site, [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org).

Another government probe against workers' rights was reported by the *Wall Street Journal* November 19. The paper reports that the FBI has established a "watch list" called "Project Lookout," in which the federal cop agency has distributed a list of hundreds of names of what it deems "suspected terrorists" to scores of private corporations across the country.

"Some companies fed versions of the list into their own databases and now use it to screen job applicants and customers," according to the *Journal*.

Some individuals have unsuccessfully sought to remove their names from this blacklist. Three brothers with the surname Atta—which happens to be the name of one of the alleged September 11 hijackers—had their names officially removed from the FBI list, but still found themselves identified as "potential terrorists" on other lists that circulate widely among corporations. The FBI told them the matter was out of its hands.

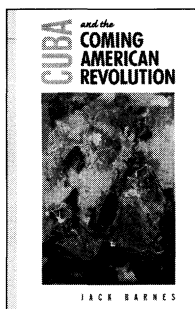
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by Jack Barnes

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